Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

BACK TO GODHEAD

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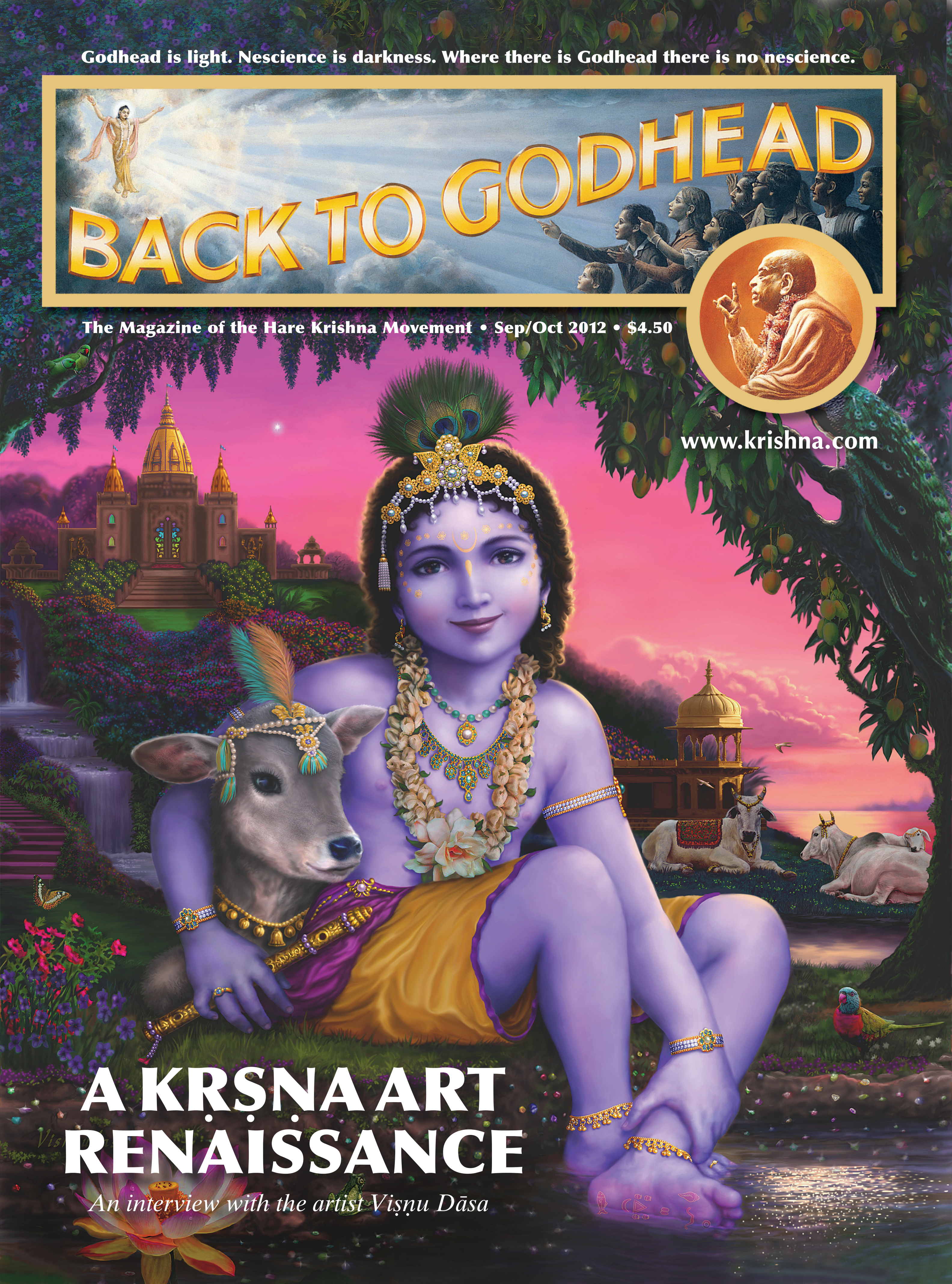


A KṚṢṆA ART RENAISSANCE

An interview with the artist Viṣṇu Dāsa

Assisting you in your quest for the Absolute Truth

BACK to GODH

Founded 1944 • Vol. 46, No. 5 • September / October 2012

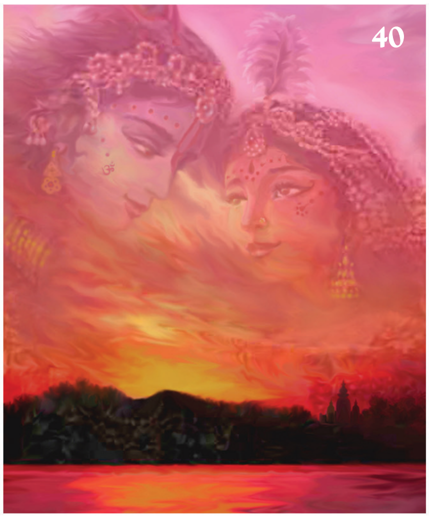
6

12

16

24

53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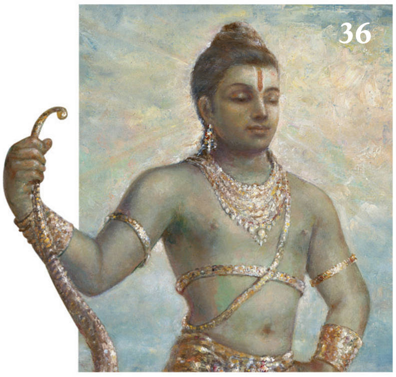

36

FEATURES

Founder's Lecture

6 The Original Seed of Everything
Śrīla Prabhupāda explains why there must be a brain behind nature and why that brain is Kṛṣṇa.

12 Finding My Authentic Illusory Self
On the path to uncovering our eternal identity, it helps to know our current conditioned "self."

16 "Mesdames et Messieurs, Metroyoga!"
A jovial group of devotees introduces the chanting of Kṛṣṇa's names to Paris subway riders.

24 The True Sage Sees With Equal Vision
A talk at a Kolkata seminar on Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu stresses the key to universal brotherhood.

36 Verses of Surrender: The Carama-Ślokas of the Śrī Vaiṣṇava Tradition
The followers of Rāmānuja, like members of other Vaiṣṇava lines, point to special verses that present the highest spiritual ideals.

Interview

40 A Kṛṣṇa Art Renaissance
Viṣṇu Dāsa has been producing Kṛṣṇa-themed paintings for more than forty years.

53 Extremist Misconceptions About the Bhagavad-gītā
A philosophical response to recent attempts to ban *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* in Russia.

DEPARTMENTS

Letters 4
Glossary 11

EAD

Book Section: Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 27
Kuvera Offers Dhruva a Benediction

Śrīla Prabhupāda Speaks Out 31
The Lack of Human Reasoning

Calendar 33

Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-Mantra 34

The Vedic Observer 50

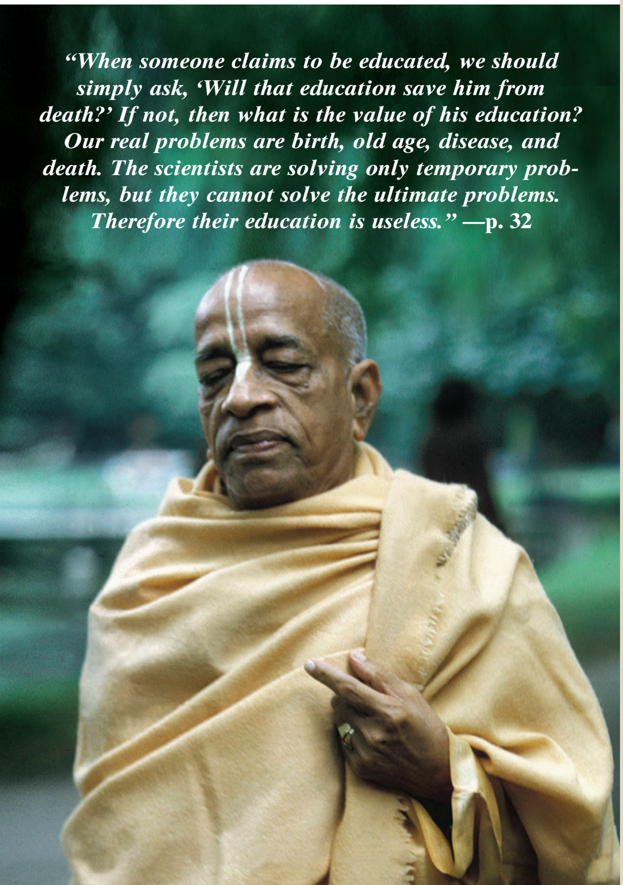
Centers Around the World 59

From the Editor 62
Who's Scared?

Krishna.com Store 63

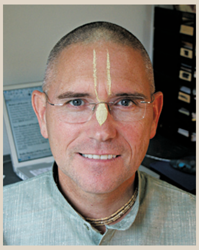
Vedic Thoughts 67

COVER Metaphors comparing Kṛṣṇa to the moon were the inspiration for "Sri Krishnachandra," the latest painting by longtime Hare Kṛṣṇa artist Viṣṇu Dāsa. Read his interview and see more of his art beginning on page 40.



***"When someone claims to be educated, we should simply ask, 'Will that education save him from death?' If not, then what is the value of his education? Our real problems are birth, old age, disease, and death. The scientists are solving only temporary problems, but they cannot solve the ultimate problems. Therefore their education is useless."* —p. 32**

WELCOME

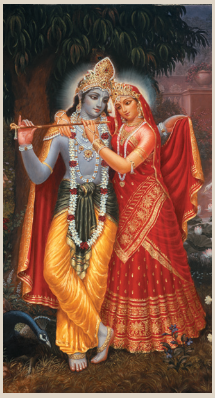


From the earliest days of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged disciples to produce paintings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and other subjects related to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. His disciple Viṣṇu Dāsa has been doing that since early in his devotional life. In this issue he talks about painting for Prabhupāda's books and the inspiration for some of his later paintings.

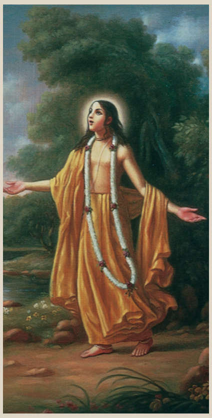
Viṣṇu Dāsa's life as an artist exemplifies an important principle of *bhakti-yoga*: using one's particular nature in Kṛṣṇa's service. Understanding who we are in this life, therefore, can help us progress spiritually, and that's the theme of "Finding My Authentic Illusory Self," by Arcana Siddhī Devī Dāsī. By engaging our particular natures in *bhakti-yoga,* we move beyond the limited, bodily conception of self that stifles us individually and blocks all attempts at universal brotherhood, as Hari Śauri Dāsa explains in "The True Sage Sees With Equal Vision."

Seeing all living beings with equal vision is one of many enlightened ideals expressed by Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* an often misunderstood text. Attempts by some in Russia to ban Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* inspired Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa's "Extremist Misconceptions About the *Bhagavad-gītā*."

Hare Kṛṣṇa.—*Nāgarāja Dāsa, Editor*



Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are together the one Supreme Absolute Truth.



Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the combined incarnation of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, inaugurated the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa five hundred years ago.

OUR PURPOSES

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

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Letters

Saving the Yamuna In Vrindavan

The article "The Save Yamuna Campaign" in the July/August issue was great but did not address the specific problems in Vrindavan or the efforts to solve them. I feel strongly that Mr. K. P. S. Gill and Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciple Caṇḍī Devī Dāsī should be sincerely acknowledged. They spent hundreds of thousands of dollars and two and a half months diverting the river back toward Vrindavan and cleaning its contaminated water.

During the last few years, an illegal landfill was created next to the Yamuna canal by the *parikramā mārg,* the path pilgrims walk around Vrindavan. (The Yamuna canal consists of black-water sewage runoff from homes and apartments all over Vrindavan.) Sand was dredged from the opposite side of the river and shore and brought to create the landfill. This caused the Yamuna's flow to slow down, as she became shallow where the canal met the river near Keshi Ghat.

The filthy water from the Yamuna canal had been pouring swiftly into the Yamuna, but the illegal landfill bogged down the flow and caused standing black water to seep into well water. Consequently the ground and well water in Old Vrindavan Town was becoming more and more contaminated. Both humans and animals were getting sick by drinking the polluted water.

Through a monumental project of dredging and redistribution of sand using two gigantic backhoes and an average of five hundred workers a day over the course of two and a half months, Mr. K. P. S. Gill and Caṇḍī Duke Heffner diverted the Yamuna's flow back to her original position using an ancient sandbag diversion technique. Building the last part of the diversion was the hardest due to the powerful flow of the Yamuna. Because individual sandbags were being swept away by the Yamuna's strong current, Caṇḍī taught workmen how to weave nets and fill them with sandbags. After they completed the several-kilometer sandbag bridge, Caṇḍī stocked the clean water with healthy fish and turtles, pollution having killed the former aquatics.

Anyone can see the change by walking down to the Yamuna at Keshi Ghat. Consequently, ISKCON Vrindavan held its annual boat festival in this calm, clean area of the Yamuna.

Mr. K. P. S. Gill and Caṇḍī Devī are meeting with heads of temples in Vrindavan to continue their plans and efforts to clean up the Yamuna. Their heroic endeavor deserves a huge applause.

Kuśa Devī Dāsī
Vrindavan, India

Hinduism and Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

Having spent some time reading some of your literature, I have a question: What, if any, connections do you have with mainstream Hindu beliefs as commonly understood in India?

Adela Pennyfather
Via the Internet

Our reply: The basis for the various branches of the Hindu faith practiced around the world, originating in India, is the Vedic literature. The Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is also based upon the Vedic literature, but its practices and goals are different from those of many Hindus today. The *Vedas* present humanity with a wide array of spiritual knowledge—for material advancement to heavenly planets, liberation into the impersonal Brahman, attainment of mystic perfections, and so on. The Hare Kṛṣṇa movement focuses upon developing pure, unalloyed love for the Supreme Lord, fully independent of any ulterior motive. This essence is presented by Lord Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā* and substantiated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* the mature commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra,* the essence of all Vedic theistic thought.

Hanumān and ISKCON

Hanumān is a great devotee of the Supreme Lord Śrī Rāma, yet he is never celebrated in ISKCON's Vaiṣṇava events and calendar. Why is this?

Jagannātha Dāsa Adhikārī
Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada

Our reply: Your assertion that Hanumān "is never celebrated in our Vaiṣṇava events and calendar" is incorrect. For example, many ISKCON temples have a special class about Hanumān on his appearance day. Also, some ISKCON temples have deities of Sītā-Rāma-Lakṣmaṇa-Hanumān.

We in ISKCON follow Prabhupāda's lead in where to put our emphasis, and Prabhupāda, being primarily a devotee of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Caitanya Mahāprabhu, emphasized the worship of Them and Their devotees. They are the central focus of our *paramparā,* or spiritual lineage. As far as we know, Prabhupāda never observed Hanumān Jayanti in any special way. If we were primarily Rāma *bhaktas,* his example would have been different.

We know that Hanumānjī is very popular in India, but most Indian people are unaware of the spiritual status of the followers of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. For Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas like Śrīla Prabhupāda, the worship of the Six Gosvāmīs, for example, is more important than the worship of Hanumān. Our *ācāryas* tell us that only by worshiping the Six Gosvāmīs can we attain Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *prema,* and that is our goal in life. All the associates of Caitanya Mahaprabhu are *nitya-siddhas,* eternal associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa—*gopas, gopīs,* and so on. We offer full respect to Hanumān, and our *ācāryas* point to him as an emblem of pure service to the Lord, but we mainly focus our attention on the devotees of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

In your own spiritual practice, you (or any ISKCON devotee) can certainly worship and pray to Hanumān, but for reasons given here, he is not likely to have a prominent place in the liturgy of ISKCON.

Replies were written by Krishna.com Live Help volunteers. Please write to us at: BTG, P. O. Box 430, Alachua, Florida 32616, USA. Email: editors @krishna.com.

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- Are we "bodi… ouls?"
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- Is there a Go…
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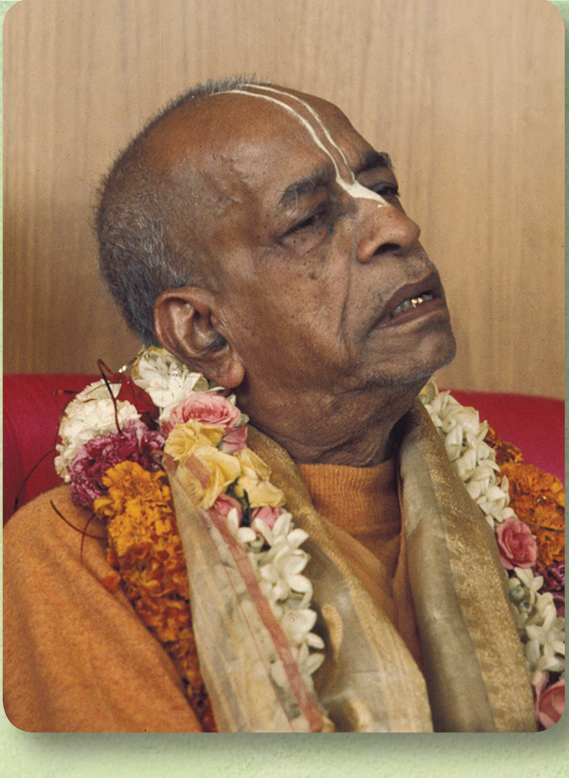
FOUNDER'S LECTURE

Bombay—February 24, 1974

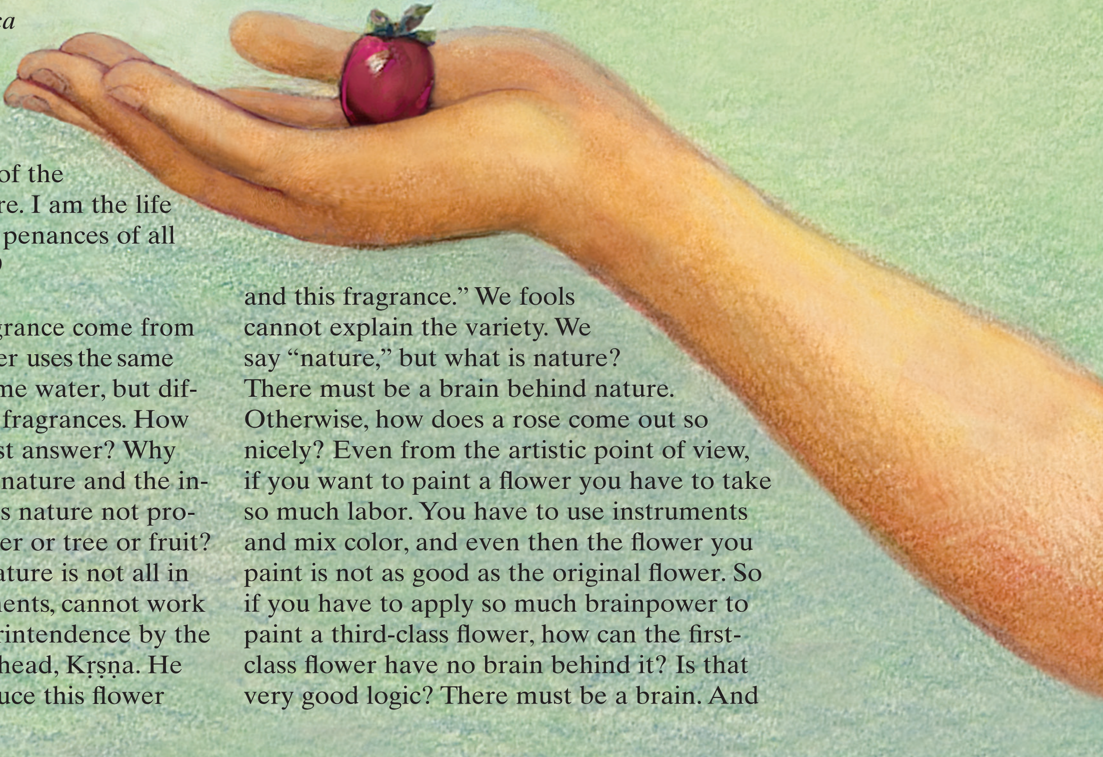


The ORIGINAL SEED OF EVERYTHING

The Bhagavad-gītā *and other Vedic scriptures tell us that we can trace everything back to Kṛṣṇa.*

By His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

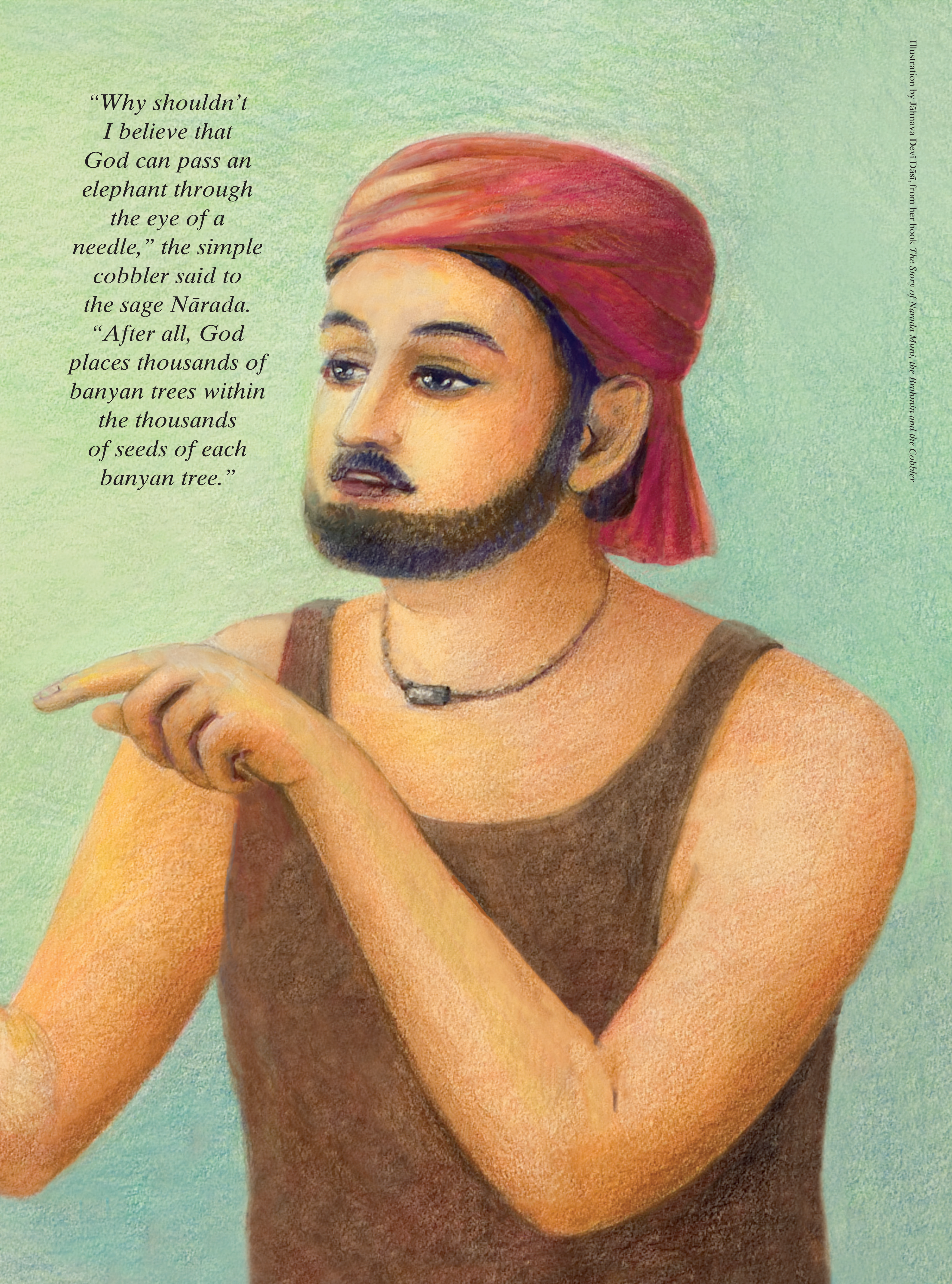


puṇyo gandhaḥ pṛthivyāṁ ca
tejaś cāsmi vibhāvasau
jīvanaṁ sarva-bhūteṣu
tapaś cāsmi tapasviṣu

"I am the original fragrance of the earth, and I am the heat in fire. I am the life of all that lives, and I am the penances of all ascetics."—*Bhagavad-gītā* 7.9

ALL VARIETIES of fragrance come from the earth. The gardener uses the same fertilizer and the same water, but different flowers have different fragrances. How is this done? Can any scientist answer? Why are there differences? If it is nature and the ingredients are the same, why is nature not producing the same kind of flower or tree or fruit?

Bhagavad-gītā says that nature is not all in all. Nature, the material elements, cannot work independently. There is superintendence by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. He dictates, "This seed will produce this flower and this fragrance." We fools cannot explain the variety. We say "nature," but what is nature? There must be a brain behind nature. Otherwise, how does a rose come out so nicely? Even from the artistic point of view, if you want to paint a flower you have to take so much labor. You have to use instruments and mix color, and even then the flower you paint is not as good as the original flower. So if you have to apply so much brainpower to paint a third-class flower, how can the first-class flower have no brain behind it? Is that very good logic? There must be a brain. And



“Why shouldn’t I believe that God can pass an elephant through the eye of a needle,” the simple cobbler said to the sage Nārada. “After all, God places thousands of banyan trees within the thousands of seeds of each banyan tree.”

Illustration by Jāhnava Devī Dāsī, from her book *The Story of Narada Muni, the Brahmin and the Cobbler* that is stated here: "It is under My superintendence."

Kṛṣṇa is giving us intelligence: "If you do not go to the temple or do not hear from the *ācārya,* you can at least try to understand My presence when you see or smell a flower." Is that very difficult? Kṛṣṇa consciousness is so nice that you can be Kṛṣṇa conscious even by drinking water, even by seeing the sunshine, even by seeing the moonshine. Or if you are a Vedic scholar, by chanting *oṁ* or even by hearing the sound vibration. Or by seeing a flower or smelling a flower. Or by seeing something brilliant.

The sun is brilliant, and the moon is brilliant. Where does the brilliance come from? It is a reflection of Kṛṣṇa's bodily brilliance. That is stated in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.40): *yasya prabhā prabhavato.* Then why should we disbelieve? We can see that the sun is so brilliant. It is a material product only. But its brilliance and temperature are unlimited. So where has the brilliance come from?

Kṛṣṇa is so powerful, and His energies are so perfect, that simply by His will, immediately everything is there.

You can say, "The sun is a composition of these chemicals," but why don't you produce an imitation sun and save so much money for electricity? At night you could have a sun to light up Bombay city. Rascals will give descriptions, but they'll never be prepared to manufacture a sun.

Recently in California one learned chemist who got the Nobel Prize said, "From matter, life has come." So one of my disciples, Svarūpa Dāmodara, asked, "Sir, if I give you all these chemicals, can you produce life?" Then he said, "That I cannot say." But if you know that these chemicals compose life, why don't you produce life when I give you the chemicals?

They are simply theorizing. We cannot decide by theorizing. But if we take shelter of Kṛṣṇa, we get perfect knowledge: "I am the background." Otherwise, how can we explain? If you have to paint a flower or create a scent, you have to mix so many chemicals. But Kṛṣṇa is so powerful, and His energies are so perfect, that simply by His will, immediately everything is there. That is the appreciation of the energy of God. If you do not appreciate it, that is your fault, but there is a brain at work.

Nowadays, because of electric energy, you simply push on a button and so many things happen immediately. Kṛṣṇa's way is still hundreds of thousands of times subtler. Simply by His will everything has come out. But because we have no brain, we evade the issue.

If you want to understand how this flower has come, how this fragrance is there, try to understand that it is due to Kṛṣṇa. And appreciate that. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The Brāhmaṇa And the Cobbler

A story illustrates how one can appreciate Kṛṣṇa.

Once, Nārada Muni was passing by, and a very learned scholar, a *brāhmaṇa,* asked him, "Sir, where are you going?"

Nārada said, "I am going to Vaikuṇṭha to see my Lord."

"Oh, will you ask Nārāyaṇa when my liberation will come?"

"All right, I shall ask."

Then Nārada met a cobbler who was sewing shoes, and he also asked, "Sir, where are you going?"

"I am going to Vaikuṇṭha to see my Lord."

"Will you ask when I shall get salvation?"

"All right, I shall ask."

When Nārada Muni met Nārāyaṇa, after finishing his business he asked the two men's question.

Nārāyaṇa said, "The cobbler will get his salvation after finishing this life, and the *brāhmaṇa* will have to wait for many, many births."

Nārada Muni thought, "How is that possible?"

Nārāyaṇa said, "When you meet them again, if they inquire, 'What was my Lord doing?' say, 'He was pulling an elephant through the eye of a needle.'"

When Nārada came back, first of all he met the *brāhmaṇa,* who asked, "Did you inquire about me, sir?"

"Yes, yes. He said that you have to wait many, many births."

The *brāhmaṇa* asked, "What was Nārāyaṇa doing when you met Him?"

"I saw that He was pulling an elephant through the eye of a needle."

The *brāhmaṇa* immediately said, "Sir, I cannot believe such a story."

The cobbler asked Nārada Muni the same question, and he replied in the same way.

The cobbler began to cry.

"Oh, my Lord is so powerful!" he said. "He can do anything."

Nārada Muni asked, "How can you believe that an elephant is being drawn through the eye of a needle?"

"Why not?" the cobbler replied. "I am sitting under this banyan tree, and every day I see that inside the banyan fruit are thousands of seeds, and I know that each seed contains a big tree like this one."

That's a fact. Kṛṣṇa says, *bījaṁ māṁ sarva-bhūtānām:* "I am the original seed of all existences." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 7.10) The beginning of everything is the Supreme Lord. That is stated in the *Vedānta-sūtra, janmādy asya yataḥ:* "[the Absolute Truth] is that from which everything comes." You cannot say that life has come from matter. That is not possible. Kṛṣṇa says *bījaṁ māṁ sarva-bhūtānām:* Kṛṣṇa is the original source of anything that has come into existence. Kṛṣṇa is life; He's not dead stone. Therefore the conclusion is that from life, life and matter have come. Not that life has come from matter. That is not the conclusion.

The Source of Perfect Knowledge

If we require perfect knowledge, then we have to accept knowledge in this way. It is called *avaroha-panthā,* the descending or deductive process. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement we claim we have perfect knowledge of everything because we take knowledge from the perfect person: Kṛṣṇa. That is the real process.

If you want to study whether man is mortal or immortal, there are two processes. With the deductive process, you take the idea from a superior person that man is mortal. If you accept, then your knowledge is perfect. But if you want to approach the knowledge by the inductive process, by studying whether each man is mortal or immortal, you may study a thousand, two thousand, five thousand, but you cannot study all men. Your conclusion remains always defective. Therefore the best process is to receive knowledge from the authorized person. Actually, we do that. We go to school, we go to college, to receive knowledge from the superior person. That is our process to receive perfect knowledge.

You cannot manufacture knowledge. Real knowledge of everything can be had from the *Bhagavad-gītā.* Study it nicely; it is very easy and perfect.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says,

sarva-yoniṣu kaunteya
mūrtayaḥ sambhavanti yāḥ
tāsāṁ brahma mahad yonir
ahaṁ bīja-pradaḥ pitā

"It should be understood that all species of life, O son of Kuntī, are made possible by birth in this material nature, and that I am the seed-giving father. (*Bhagavad-gītā* 14.4) The father gives the seed in the womb of the mother, and the child comes out. Similarly, the original seed-giving father of all living entities is Kṛṣṇa. Therefore Kṛṣṇa is international, or inter-universal. Kṛṣṇa is not a Hindu or an Indian or this or that. Kṛṣṇa is for everyone. I have explained to my foreign students—American, European, African, and others: "Kṛṣṇa is for everyone. Don't take it that Kṛṣṇa is for the Hindus, for the Indians, or for the *brāhmaṇas* or the *kṣatriyas.* No. Kṛṣṇa is for everyone." Therefore our society's name is "Krishna Consciousness."

The Original Father

Our only request is "Take Kṛṣṇa as the original father." It is very easy to understand. I have my father, my father has his father, who has his father, and so on. But who is the original father? The original father is Kṛṣṇa. *Ahaṁ bīja-pradaḥ pitā.*

Where is the difficulty to understand this? There must be an original father. If you go on researching who is the original father, then you'll come to the conclusion that Kṛṣṇa is the original father.

īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ
sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ
anādir ādir govindaḥ
sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam

"Kṛṣṇa, who is known as Govinda, is the Supreme Godhead. He has an eternal blissful spiritual body. He is the origin of all. He has no other origin, and He is the prime cause of all causes." (*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.1)

This is the Vedic version. Father's father, his father, his father—you go on and on and you come to Brahmā, who is considered the forefather or grandfather, *pitāmaha.* But Kṛṣṇa is addressed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* as *prapitāmaha,* the father of Brahmā.

Those who are conversant with the *śāstra,* or Vedic scriptures, know that another name for Brahmā is Svayambhū, "self-born," because he's not born of any material father and mother. He's born on the lotus sprouted from the navel of Garbho-

What Is the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement?

Founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) carries on a great ancient tradition rooted in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* the teachings Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke five millennia ago. The *Gītā* and the other Vedic scriptures declare Kṛṣṇa to be the original person, God Himself, who appears periodically in this world to liberate all living beings.

Only five hundred years ago, Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach the most sublime and effective means of meditation for the present day: the chanting of the names of God, especially as found in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

Today members of ISKCON continue Lord Caitanya's movement by distributing the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra all over the world.

Pronunciation

We spell Sanskrit words and names by a phonetic system that lets you know how to say each word. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in b**u**t, long **ā** like the **a** in f**a**r (and held twice as long as the short **a**). Pronounce **e** like the **a** in ev**a**de, long **ī** like the **i** in p**i**que. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **ri**m, and **c** like the **ch** in **ch**air. Pronounce consonants like **ch**, **jh**, and **dh** as in staun**ch-h**eart, hed**ge-h**og, and re**d-h**ot. Pronounce **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh**. So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.

Spiritual Names

ISKCON members receive names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or his great devotees, combined with Dāsa, for men, or Dāsī, for women, both of which mean "servant." For instance, the name Kṛṣṇa Dāsa means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

dakaśāyī Viṣṇu. Brahmā is an authority because he was first educated about the Vedic knowledge by Kṛṣṇa, or Viṣṇu. *Tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye muhyanti yat sūrayaḥ* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.1). *Brahma* here means "Vedic knowledge," *tene* means "imparted," *ādi-kavaye* means "unto the original learned person" in this universe, and *muhyanti yat sūrayaḥ* means that even big, big personalities become bewildered when trying to understand Kṛṣṇa. Therefore Kṛṣṇa says, as we have already discussed,

manuṣyāṇāṁ sahasreṣu
kaścid yatati siddhaye
yatatām api siddhānāṁ
kaścin māṁ vetti tattvataḥ

"Out of many thousands among men, one may endeavor for perfection, and of those who have achieved perfection, hardly one knows Me in truth." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 7.3)

Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Person and the original source of everything. Therefore Arjuna accepted Kṛṣṇa's teachings: "My dear Kṛṣṇa, whatever You are saying I accept in toto, not deducting, not giving my own commentary." That is the way to study *Bhagavad-gītā.*

If you study *Bhagavad-gītā* as it is, and if you accept it, then your life is successful. Otherwise, you'll never understand God or the ultimate source, the Absolute Truth.

Spread Kṛṣṇa's Teachings

The *Bhagavad-gītā* is the essence of all Vedic literature because, after all, the purpose of Vedic study is to understand Kṛṣṇa, the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. *Vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyaḥ:* "By all the *Vedas* I am to be known." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 15.15). The Supreme Personality Himself is giving knowledge of the Supreme. Therefore we are preaching *Bhagavad-gītā* as it is, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And the easiest method to attain Kṛṣṇa consciousness is to chant Kṛṣṇa's name. That is recommended in the *śāstra.* We have not manufactured the idea.

When Mahārāja Parīkṣit learned all the defects of this age, Kali-yuga, he was a little disappointed. He asked, "How will human beings be relieved from the miserable condition of materialistic life in this Age of Kali?"

It is stated in the *śāstra* that in Kali-yuga the government will be all *mlecchas,* uncivilized persons, not *kṣatriyas,* or rulers trained in spiritual principles. *Mlecchas* will take government posts, and their business will be to devour the citizens, who will feel so harassed that they will give up their home and hearth and go to the forest.

That time is coming. If there are no such divisions as *brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya,* and *śūdra,* that is animal civilization.

Social, political, economic—all solutions are there in the *Bhagavad-gītā.* The *Gītā* is the property of Indians—it was spoken in India—and it was desired that all Indians should learn it and spread the knowledge all over the world, but unfortunately, the rascals are doing nothing. Caitanya Mahāprabhu ordered,

bhārata-bhūmite haila
manuṣya-janma yāra
janma sārthaka kari'
kara para-upakāra

"One who has taken his birth as a human being in the land of India [Bhārata-varṣa] should make his life successful and work for the benefit of all other people." (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā* 9.41). *Bhagavad-gītā* is for the perfect human being. The other parts of the world are in darkness. So there is great need to spread the knowledge of *Bhagavad-gītā* all over the world. The customers are ready. If you want to glorify India, if you want to glorify your life, just study *Bhagavad-gītā* as it is and spread it all over the world. You'll be honored.

People think that whatever I have done singlehandedly is wonderful. If many, many persons go outside India and preach this gospel of *Bhagavad-gītā,* those who receive it will be benefitted and those who

(*please turn to page 58*)

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Ācārya—a spiritual master who teaches by example.

Balarāma—Lord Kṛṣṇa's first expansion, who acts in the role of Lord Kṛṣṇa's elder brother.

Battle of Kurukshetra—an epic battle for rule of the world, fought five thousand years ago.

Bhagavad-gītā—the sacred book in which Lord Kṛṣṇa gives the essence of knowledge to His friend and disciple Arjuna. (Cited as Bg.)

Bhakti—devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

Bhakti-yoga—linking with the Supreme Lord through devotional service.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu—the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared five hundred years ago to teach the chanting of the names of God as the religion for the present age.

Darśana—"viewing," audience with a deity or saintly person.

Dharma—(1) ordained duties or religious principles; (2) one's eternal, natural occupation (i.e., devotional service to the Lord).

Godhead—the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Reality, progressively realized first as the impersonal all-pervasive oneness, more fully as the Supersoul within the heart of every living being, and ultimately as the all-opulent Supreme Person.

Gurukula—a school where children learn the philosophy and practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness along with regular academic subjects (literally "the place of the guru").

Hare Kṛṣṇa—the great mantra Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

ISKCON—the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Japa—individual chanting of names of God, usually while counting on beads.

Kali-yuga—in the endlessly repeated cycle of four cosmic ages, the present and worst age, the Age of Quarrel, of which 5,000 of 432,000 years have passed.

Karma—material action; its inevitable reaction; or the law by which such action and reaction are governed.

Kīrtana—congregational singing of names of God, usually accompanied by cymbals (*karatālas*) and drums (*mṛdaṅgas*).

Kṛṣṇa—the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His original transcendental form (see "Godhead").

Mahābhārata—the epic history of ancient India, a history in which the *Bhagavad-gītā* appears as the most important and well-known text.

Māyā—illusion; the energy of the Supreme Lord that deludes living entities into forgetting their spiritual nature and forgetting God.

Māyāvādī—one who regards the Absolute Truth as ultimately impersonal.

Modes of nature—the three qualities (goodness, passion, and ignorance) that hold sway over all action in the material world.

Nityānanda—the incarnation of Lord Balarāma who appeared with Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Prasāda—vegetarian food that has been prepared for the Lord and offered to Him with devotion.

Purāṇas—Vedic histories.

Rādhārāṇī—Lord Kṛṣṇa's consort and pleasure potency.

Rathayātrā—"chariot festival": a festival in which the form of Kṛṣṇa is borne in procession on a large canopy-topped chariot or float, especially the festival originating in Puri, India, for Jagannātha (Lord Kṛṣṇa, "the Lord of the universe").

Sannyāsa—the renounced life of a man who relinquishes home to dedicate himself fully to the Supreme.

Śāstra—scriptures, especially the Vedic scriptures of India.

Śrī—an honorific meaning "opulent" (similarly: Śrīla, Śrīmad, Śrīmān, Śrīmatī).

Śrīla Prabhupāda—His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—the most important of the eighteen *Purāṇas,* which tells of the nature and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. (Cited as *Bhāg.*)

Supersoul—the form of the Lord who resides in every heart along with the individual soul.

Vaiṣṇava—a devotee of the Supreme Lord (from the word *Viṣṇu*).

Varṇāśrama—the Vedic social system. It organizes society into four occupational and four spiritual divisions (*varṇas* and *āśramas*). The members of the four *varṇas* are the *brāhmaṇas* (intellectuals and priests), the *kṣatriyas* (administrators and soldiers), the *vaiśyas* (farmers and businessmen), and the *śūdras* (laborers and artisans). The members of the four *āśramas* are the *brahmacārīs* (celibate students), *gṛhasthas* (married people), *vānaprasthas* (retired people), and *sannyāsīs* (renunciants).

Vedas—the hymns of knowledge revealed by the Lord Himself at the beginning of creation.

Vedic—pertaining to the culture in which the *Vedas* and related scriptures guide all aspects of human life.

Viṣṇu—any form of the Personality of Godhead (see "Godhead"); the forms the Lord manifests to create and sustain the material world.

Vṛndāvana—the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, mirrored on earth as the town in India where Kṛṣṇa appeared five thousand years ago.

BHAKTI & OUR AUTHENTIC ILLU

To move forward along the spiritual path, it's important to understand our unique

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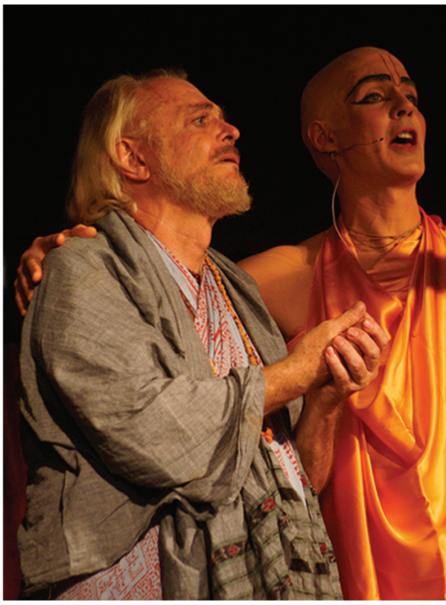

I'M TEN YEARS OLD and standing at the blackboard in elementary school on an island in Puget Sound, part of the state of Washington. I'm the only Jewish child in the school; most of the kids don't even know what that is. It's geography class, and we are studying Israel. I feel proud, since Israel is a Jewish country. The teacher asks me if I know Hebrew. I lie and say yes. Next she asks me if I can write the alphabet. Again I lie and say yes. She hands me a piece of chalk and tells me to go the chalkboard to write the alphabet and pronounce the letters.

Panic runs through my body. I promise God I'll never lie again.

I take the chalk from her hand, walk to the front of the room, and stare at the blackboard. I'm perspiring and feel sick to my stomach. I don't even know how many letters there are in the Hebrew alphabet.

"It's okay," I tell myself. "Nobody knows Hebrew. They won't know I'm making it up."

I start to make up little characters like those I've seen in the prayer books. I know they read from right to left, so I inform the class and gain some confidence. I make up sounds to go with the letters as perspiration drips down my arms.

I finish, and the teacher and students applaud.

Relieved, I take my seat and again promise God, "I'll never lie again."

Triggered Memory

This embarrassing memory of mine emerges during a therapy session with one of my clients. She is talking about finding her authentic self and how she has pretended to be someone else all her life. Her father wanted her to be a success-

SORY SELF

By Arcana Siddhī Devī Dāsī

Photos by Yamarāja Dāsa

conditioned nature.

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ULATIC
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ful professional, and for years she suppressed her artistic nature and worked as a computer programmer. After years of unfilled days at work, she walked out of her office, leaving a note on her desk: "I quit."

After the session ended I wondered about the emergence of my own memory triggered by my client's search for her authentic self. While growing up I tried to paint a picture of myself for others that fit what I wanted, rather than an accurate "me." In psychology this is known as our persona or projective ego. Our projected ego might align with our actual feelings and beliefs, or it might diametrically oppose them.

Many of the choices I made in life were for my persona rather than me. In this way I cheated myself by denying myself the things that were important to me so I could appear a certain way to others. I took French instead of Spanish because it was considered a more difficult language. Knowing French has never been of much use in my life, whereas Spanish would have been very helpful. I got a Bachelor of Science in psychology rather than a Bachelor of Arts—again because it was more difficult

Above: We are all eternal souls and not the bodies we temporarily inhabit, but understanding our particular psychophysical natures can help us to engage in Kṛṣṇa's service and thus realize our true identity as His eternal servants.

and would give the impression that I was more intelligent. Instead of taking classes that were interesting to my nature, I took intellectually grueling courses in math and the hard sciences.

To have our projective ego accurately represent our inner state is good for our mental stability and spiritual growth: "To thine own self be true." I remember other times when I misrepresented myself to others—running for class president, talking to a boy I liked, interviewing for a job, trying to impress someone or beat the competition. To look good, I had to lie and take credit for things I hadn't done, exaggerate something positive, or minimize or deny something negative.

I rarely got caught at my game, except the time I copied a poem from a book and told my father I wrote it. It wasn't a serious offense, so he just smiled and told me I could go outside when I told him the truth about the poem. I felt stupid, although the whole reason I did it was to feel smart. It backfired. I wanted to be smarter. My brothers were brains, and my parents belong to the Mensa Society—people who score in the top 2% of IQ in the world. They knew lots of big words and lots of facts about the world. I had my own gifts, but I didn't see them as valuable and therefore found myself standing at the chalkboard making up the Hebrew alphabet. I once heard a saying: "Be who you are because no one else is going to do it for you."

Accepting One's Nature

This theme of accepting one's own nature is found in the *Bhagavad-gītā.* In the beginning of their discussion, Arjuna tells Kṛṣṇa he wants to leave the battlefield and go to the forest to live the life of an ascetic. In this way he hopes to avoid killing his family members and his teachers and being implicated in the degradation of society. Throughout this divine discussion, Kṛṣṇa repeatedly encourages Arjuna to accept his conditioned nature and use it in serving the Supreme Lord.

Kṛṣṇa goes so far as to tell Arjuna that even if he could do something outside his disposition perfectly, he should reject that and stick to performing activities in harmony with his particular psychophysical nature. Arjuna was a warrior and a leader among men. He was courageous, fearless, powerful, and resourceful. His desire to leave the battlefield and seek refuge in the forest would only lead to his misery. He didn't have the mentality or disposition for a renounced life and would thereby be unfulfilled. When the mind is unfulfilled, it looks to engage the senses with sense objects—the antithesis of renounced life. He would likely end up using his natural inclinations in the forest to kill other living entities and would incur reactions for acts not sanctioned by scripture.

LOOKING FOR NEWS OF THE HARE KṚṢṆA MOVEMENT?

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The Internet is the ideal place for timely news, and ISKCON.com, run by ISKCON Communications, maintains an active news page. So whether you want to see what's happening in ISKCON or have some news to report, log on to www.ISKCON.com.

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Hariprasad Chaurasia at Radhadesh museum opening

Radhanath Swami Embarks on North American Book Tour

MADHAVA SMULLEN | American-born spiritual teacher Radhanath Swami will set off on a North American book tour from August 1st to December 1st this year, to promote the US trade release of his autobiography The Journey Home.

New Yorkers Go Dough Nuts for Prasadam

MADHAVA SMULLEN | A trendy New York purveyor of gourmet doughnuts clues us in on his most important ingredient: devotion to Krishna.

Temple Profile: Johannesburg, South Africa

MADHAVA SMULLEN | ISKCON's temple in Lenasia, a suburb of Johannesburg, is home to the Bhaktivedanta College of Education and Training, and to several active youth groups. But the beautiful Sri Sri Nitai Gaura-Hari, the oldest Deities in South Africa, remain the top reason to visit.

Eventually Arjuna understands that the Lord has ordained the war. By using his God-given skills and talents in the war for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure, Arjuna would become free from any sinful reactions and gain the greatest gift—devotion to the Lord.

To act according to our conditioned nature alone is not enough to make progress in our spiritual evolution. But when we combine acting according to our nature with serving Kṛṣṇa, we then have a recipe for spiritual advancement. If we want to jump to touch the stars, it is good to start with two feet on the ground.

Out of Touch

In my work with devotees as a psychotherapist, I see depression and anxiety that stem from being out of touch with who they are in this body—something my husband and I dubbed "the authentic illusory self" (our psychophysical nature, which covers the real self, the soul). While it sounds like an oxymoron, there is a lot of merit to understanding our conditioning. This illusory self is a covering of our real eternal spiritual nature. The goal of life is to transcend the illusory covering and activate our dormant spiritual self by engaging in devotional service to the Lord. But to achieve the goal, we need to use our conditioned body to traverse the path.

The more we can work with, rather than against, our conditioning, the more we will gain momentum in our spiritual journey. A big part of the therapeutic process is uncovering, identifying, and understanding a person's "authentic illusory self." The more clearly people understand who they are in this body, the easier it will be for them to identify the kind of work or service they are most suited to engage in.

In Vedic culture astrology was used to help determine a child's particular conditioning. This would help the parents know how to train their child and to have some understanding of the karmic lessons the child would face in life. In modern times it is hard to find expert astrologers, but some devotees have found astrology helpful in understanding their particular natures. There are also other systems for understanding personality that devotees have found useful, such as the Myers-Briggs Personality Types and the ancient system of Enneagrams. While imperfections may exist with any system, we have to use what is available and know that Kṛṣṇa will help.

Kṛṣṇa kindly guides us from within as the Lord in our heart, and from without as gurus, teachers, family and friends, books, and other resources. Much of our work in knowing our authentic illusory self is to be tuned in and open to receiving input from these sources. This will help us look inside and honestly assess our strengths, our weaknesses, our gifts, our preferences, our desires, our fears, and all the elements that constitute our material conditioning.

Aside from understanding our conditioning, it is also important for devotees to understand their position on the *bhakti* path. If you are in the mall and want to get to a particular store, first you have to know where you are. Then you can look at the mall map and figure out the best way to get to the store. Devotees need to understand where they are in their spiritual journey, with the help of advanced Vaiṣṇavas, and proceed accordingly. When devotees jump ahead of or fall behind their actual standing in *bhakti,* they may fall from their spiritual practices. Accepting our conditioned natures and our spiritual position with a humble attitude will assure our gradual success over time.

Over the years Kṛṣṇa has helped me bring my heart and persona in harmony. After thirty-five years of practicing devotional service, along with honest introspection, I now accept who I am in this body, while knowing that my actual identity is different from this body. I'm at peace with my nature and feel liberated from trying to be something different.

Recently a visitor to the temple asked me if I knew Sanskrit.

"No," I happily said, "but I know how to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Would you like me to teach you that?"

Arcana Siddhī Devī Dāsī was initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1977. She lives with her husband in Sandy Ridge, North Carolina, where she works as a psychotherapist.

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“Mesdames et Messieurs, M

Spreading the saṅkīrtana movement in the Paris subway.

By Candraśekhara Ācārya Dāsa

Photos by Cittī Devī Dāsī

AS THE TRAIN approaches the platform, we begin *kīrtana.* The doors of the train open, and we enter, singing. Passengers look at us with puzzled faces; some think we are musicians asking for money. The doors close. We stop chanting, and with a slightly jocular tone I briefly introduce ourselves in French.

“Ladies and gentlemen, your attention please! This is completely free! Relax and breathe deeply. It’s already 7:30 P.M. Paris is a busy city; chances are you haven’t done your daily yoga session yet. But have no fear, because the *metroyoga* team is here! We represent the cutting-edge of the yoga scene. There is no need to stretch and hold poses here; we are experts in the field who chant mystical mantras with love. We do this thirty meters underground in the darkness of the subway. Ladies and gentlemen—*metroyoga*!”

We start *kīrtana* again.

While the train moves along, we chant melodiously, following a sweet Indonesian tune or a bluesy melody Gadādhara Priya

etroyoga!”

Dāsa plays on his portable harmonium. Seeing the innocence and originality of our performance, the passengers loosen up.

When the doors close after the next stop, we again halt the *kīrtana* and I say, “Ladies and gentlemen, for those of you who have just come aboard, this is your daily free session of *metroyoga*. The prayer, or mantra, we are chanting—in a more or less graceful way—has the potency to thoroughly redress the economic situation in the entire Euro zone, especially in Greece and in Italy.”

The author (at left, with drum) lightens the mood with a joke in the Paris subway. Below, the metroyoga *team descends to the trains.*

People smirk.

I continue, "This chanting connects the soul with God and—believe it or not—even manages to make a few human beings smile in the subway!"

The concept of *metroyoga* arose spontaneously one dark and damp Parisian late-afternoon in the winter of 2008. Three of us were chanting on the windy street near the Opéra. Practically nobody paid any attention to us as they hurried by. Cold and frustrated, we decided to get warm down in the subway. While underground, we began an impromptu *kīrtana* on the platform. And when a train came by, we spontaneously decided to hop onto it, and we continued chanting inside. Straightaway we noticed how the relational dynamic with people inside the train was very different from when we sing outside on the street; it was more intimate. After that first experience, we decided to keep doing this. We refined it; we gave it a name and a website. It became our daily routine.

An Honorary Vegetarian

As the train moves along, I point to Sara, who is ready with her basket of *prasādam* cookies she baked an hour earlier.

"Along with this chanting," I exclaim," comes a free organic vegetarian cookie. Please take one."

I pick out a young man or a young woman among the commuters and put him or her on the spot.

If it is a woman, I ask her, "Mademoiselle, are you a vegetarian?"

Before she can open her mouth to reply, Gadādhara Priya and I cut her off, clap our hands, and declare loudly in unison, "Ladies and gentlemen, she *is* a vegetarian! Congratulations!"

Everyone chuckles.

We start *kīrtana* again. In spite of the jolting of the train, Sara walks through the isle with Italian elegance, gracefully offering a cookie with a silver spoon to the sitting and standing passengers. We repeatedly marvel at just how many Parisians accept a cookie and eat it on the spot. She also gives them one of our business cards, which has the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra on one side and www.metroyoga.fr on the other. The website has photographs and videos of us, a section where people can (and do) leave remarks, and links to various Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava websites. We keep the design of the card simple—free of any explicit proselytizing—precisely because we want the mood of our presentation to remain discrete, enigmatic, and attractive.

"When we enter the train," Sara says, "it is like a flood, and they cannot escape. I often think of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who said, 'Distribute *prasādam* and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa; for the mass of people this is the only medicine.'"

She adds, "Years ago, when I was a student in Milano, I was also sitting like these people in the metro. I used to watch the passengers around me and wonder, 'Who are they? Who am I? What happens when we die?' Now it is so blissful to be in the metro again, but this time knowing the answers to these questions and sharing them with

Sara (right) passes out mantra cards along with prasādam *cookies she made earlier. Below, two passengers get a kick out of the author's humorous presentation.*

other people."

When the doors close after the third stop, we again halt the *kīrtana.*

"Ladies and gentlemen," I call out, "for those of you philosophically inclined, please consider that reincarnation is similar to riding on the subway: We are stuck in one train on one line for some time, and then we switch onto another train on another line. Similarly, the soul is in one body for some years, and after death it switches to another body for some more years."

All the while, Gadādhara Priya, standing next to me, silently mimics my philosophical statements with exaggerated hand and facial gestures, making people laugh. Then, pointing to the young lady we unanimously declared to be a vegetarian a few minutes earlier, I put her on the spot again.

"Mademoiselle," I ask, "do you *also* believe in reincarnation?"

Cashing in on the humor of repetition, Gadādhara Priya and I again cut her off before she can open her mouth and exclaim in unison while clapping our hands, "Ladies and gentlemen, this lady *also* believes in reincarnation! Please give her a round of applause!"

People laugh again.

The Joy and the Magic of Chanting

We try to present the chanting of the holy hame, which is the essence of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism, in a personal, original, and kind way. Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya describes Lord Caitanya as *nava-hāsya-kāram,* or He who "makes ever-new jokes

that cause much laughter.” We try to embody the same light, friendly spirit. We are not trying to impose orthodoxy; we just want people to get a glimpse of the joy and magic of the *saṅkīrtana* movement, which, as Lord Caitanya says, “enables us to fully taste the nectar for which we are always anxious.” We try to communicate the message that the *yuga-dharma,* the religious process for this age, is relevant and easy to perform in any condition. Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is simple; people can even do it in the subway.

We try to be original, too. Śrīla Prabhupāda says in his purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.8.54, “An *ācārya* who comes for the service of the Lord cannot be expected to conform to a stereotype, for he must find the ways and means by which Kṛṣṇa consciousness may be spread.” This applies to all of us; we are all small *ācāryas,* or gurus, in our own ways. According to time and circumstance, we should try make Kṛṣṇa consciousness culturally relevant and user-friendly. For me, two passages from scripture have relevance to *metroyoga:* In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.14.3, Lord Brahmā assures, “Those who, *even while remaining situated in their established social positions* [emphasis mine], offer all respects to descriptions of Your personality and activities . . . certainly conquer Your Lordship. . . .” And Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his puport to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 7.128, “Many people inquire whether they have to give up family life to join the Society, but that is not our mission. One can remain comfortably in his residence. We simply request everyone to chant the *mahā-mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.”

In pursuance of this theme, I do *metroyoga* dressed in contemporary clothes. By my own exam-

ple, I want to show people they can just be themselves—without having to change the way they dress—and simply add the chanting of the holy name to their lives. Gadādhara Priya and Sara, on the other hand, prefer traditional Indian attire. Our differing clothing styles make for a pleasant variety which tells onlookers that dress is secondary and anyone can chant Hare Kṛṣṇa garbed however he or she wants. (Śrīla Prabhupāda once said, "I have not said that you [must] dress like that [in traditional Indian attire]. [If] you like, you do it. . . . We are not concerned with the dress; we are concerned with the advancement of spiritual understanding, that's all." [June 1974, Paris])

Although performing music inside the Paris subway is technically illegal, many musicians do it anyway. They ask for money, too. We, on the other hand, make it clear from the beginning that we do not want any payment. On rare occasions, the subway authorities apprehend us. They are generally sympathetic, however, because they know we are the only "musicians"

Devotees wave good-by to passengers after leaving a train (left). Below, Gadādhara Priya Dāsa has fun with a passenger. At bottom, riders applaud the entertaining performance.

who do not ask for money. When we sporadically meet them, they ask us to stop. We then usually switch to another line, without any further problems. We are grateful to the Paris subway authorities for being kind to the *metroyoga* team. God bless them.

Serving the Holy Name

As I lightly beat the *mṛdaṅga*, as Gadādhara Priya hits the keys of his harmonium, and as Maṅgalavatī gently strikes her *karatālas,* we try to listen—our ears wide open—to the transcendental vibration of Kṛṣṇa's name. Our only shelter in the subway is the sound vibration of the *mahā-mantra.* Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura sings, "In all the fourteen worlds, there is nothing but the holy name." (*Aruṇodaya-kīrtana*) We serve the holy name by earnestly listening to its sound and by providing passengers the opportunity to hear it—maybe for the first time in their journey through *saṁsāra,* the ongoing cycle of birth and death in the material world. As humbly as we can, we meditate on Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya's statement: "The Vaiṣṇavas have received the mercy of Gaura [Caitanya Mahāprabhu]. Seeing the unfortunate condition of the fallen souls who are completely bound in the cycle of birth and death, they take compassion on them and distribute the holy names of the Lord." (*Śrī Caitanya-śataka* 31) We feel deeply fortunate for the opportunity to enable these people's first step in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Gadādhara Priya recalls, "One day when I was a child, I was riding in the metro with my mother. I asked her, '*Maman,* these people seem nice; why don't we speak to them?'

"She retorted, '*Non,* Guillaume; we don't speak to anyone and everyone in the metro.'

"I found the stuffy, noncommunicative atmosphere of the subway strange. I thought, 'These people really look bored. And yet they could be friends with each other. Why can't we talk to them?'

The kīrtana *continues as the* metroyoga *team awaits the next train.*

"Forty-five years later, while doing *metroyoga* in the same metro line, I remember my thoughts as a child, and I smile."

As the train slows down before reaching our fourth stop, we interrupt the *kīrtana* and I say, before the doors open, "Ladies and gentlemen, you have been wonderful, tolerant, attentive, and patient."

I really mean it. Then I add, with some loving playfulness, "We all experienced a truly deep moment of yoga together."

I continue, "This *metroyoga* team does this every day in the Paris subway, totally free of charge, as a humble attempt to generate a little bit of joy. [Gadādhara Priya interjects, "And love!"] So please, ladies and gentlemen, give us a round of applause to encourage us in our endeavor. Thank you very much."

Passengers clap every time.

We exit the train, stand on the platform, turn around, and begin *kīrtana* again, facing the passengers. During these few seconds before the doors close, we make eye contact with them. We know—and they know—we may never see each other again. But the moment is very sweet; they realize that we did not want to exploit them, that we simply wanted to share with them something we consider dear and magical.

The doors close. As the train moves on, we wave goodbye to the passengers through the window. Smiling, many of them wave back. Someone might give us a thumbs' up. On occasion a tear falls down a woman's cheek.

Gadādhara Priya says, "The atmosphere inside the train really transforms while we're in there. Some people smile immediately. As we chant, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu drowns the train with the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. We witness first-hand how strangers become our friends in only a few short moments. Some applaud, some clap their hands to the beat, and others burst out laughing. They thank us sincerely and wave to us as a sign of appreciation."

Well-Received Chanting

When the train is gone, we huddle on the platform. Maṅgalavatī pulls out a book—*Caitanya-bhāgavata* or *Bhagavad-gītā*—and we start reading out loud to each other for a few minutes to remain absorbed in transcendence. When the next train makes its entrance a few minutes later, she puts the book away and

we begin *kīrtana.* The doors open, we enter inside, and we repeat the routine, beginning with "Ladies and gentlemen, your attention please! This is completely free . . ." We perform these *metroyoga* sessions all the way until the end of the line, after which we go back on the same line, or switch onto another line. Three hours of *metroyoga* seem like an instant. We feel so enthused and Kṛṣṇa conscious afterwards.

Maṅgalavatī says, "I have never seen a *harināma* party so well received in France. We can easily judge the quality of this program by witnessing the impact these few minutes of *kīrtana* and philosophical exchanges have on the subway passengers. I love to observe how their expressions change—from skepticism to curiosity, to laughter, and to gratitude at the end—having been touched by the encounter."

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu predicted that the chanting of the holy name would spread to every town and village. For this to happen, devotees need to behave in such a way that people trust and love them; there is no way around it. People ought to see that Vaiṣṇavas and Vaiṣṇavīs are down-to-earth people. They must understand that devotees are just like everyone else, with the exception that they chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. We hope our *metroyoga* project is a step in this direction. ❁

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Cittī Devī Dāsī, the photographer for this article, is from Australia. Visit her website at http://www.chittilardi.com/.

The TRUE SAGE Sees With EQUAL VISION

Despite the best intentions, attempts at equality in this world inevitably fail.

By Hari Śauri Dāsa

Faces: © Chris Schmidt | istockphoto.com. Starburst: © Martin Fischer | dreamstime.com. Montage: Yamarāja Dāsa

Adapted from a paper delivered at a seminar on "Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Universal Brotherhood," hosted by the Gaudiya Mission and held on February 20–21, 2012, in Kolkata, India.

THE POST-industrial world is international and multicultural. Thoughts can be shared at the speed of light, communication between individuals or groups anywhere on the surface of the globe happens instantaneously, and technology transcends what were once insurmountable barriers.

In the last century, colonialism has been shunned, the exertion of racial superiority has been made illegal in most civilized countries, and the concept of one gender as superior to the other has been overturned. Nations now share their trading and wealth and participate in multinational endeavors across the globe as well as in space. Political differences are being reduced, and the vision of a world of nations united is anticipated.

Here in India the differences of caste are being abolished, at least legally, communalism is condemned, and the democratic rights of every sector of society are being exerted.

Discrimination has become an ugly word, and great effort is being made through legislation to remove it. The call of the day is for unity and equality. There is a great desire to eliminate the differences that divide us, with the hope that we can realize a oneness of human existence where peace and satisfaction abound in a global community of mutual respect.

Yet despite our best intentions, the power of legislation, economic forums, and social engineering, disparity and dissonance abound. The platform of real equality and true respect remains elusive and distant, and the disadvantaged far outnumber the privileged and prosperous few. Differences remain, and the sense of superiority of one over the other continues to cause conflict. In our attempts to be politically correct, we have created the phenomenon of reverse discrimination.

Failed Attempts At Equality

Artificial attempts to establish equality have in their own turn created further conflict and subjugation and finally proved to be futile failures. In the great global communist uprisings of the last century, feudal hierarchy and capitalist exploitation were overturned and replaced by idealistic proletariats, only to see new ruling classes established that were as brutal and suppressive as the ones they replaced. The attempts to eliminate the financial sectors and replace them with communal systems of enterprise led to the bloody destruction of tens of millions of the very people they were meant to represent, and all to no avail. The entrepreneurial spirit could not be suppressed, and within a few short decades exerted itself once again.

We'll never have true equality in the world unless people understand that all living beings are souls covered by various types of material bodies.

Nowadays so-called communist countries have become world financial powerhouses. Here in Bengal we were recently entertained with a pre-election declaration by the leader of the communist party that he is now "a capitalist communist."

And what of the pursuit of gender equality and women's rights? If in the name of women's liberation we allow the rampant killing of children by abortion, how is that equal? Try telling the yearly cull of approximately forty-two million fetuses that their sacrifice is making the world a better place.

While we pass legislation to make all citizens equal, we ignore the plight of our less-than-human fellow living beings. Indeed, the advocates of equality are happy to gorge themselves upon the estimated forty-eight billion land animals slaughtered annually to satiate their tongues.

The truth is that nature is diverse and irrepressible. While the goal of equal rights is laudable, the attempt to establish it cannot succeed at the expense of reality. Artificial and forcible measures, well intentioned as they may be, result in the burden of disadvantage being shifted to other sectors of society, rather than eliminated.

True Unity in Diversity

In this short paper we shall suggest a worldview that encompasses all living beings and creates a platform of true unity in diversity. This can be achieved through the philosophy and example of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the great emissary of divine love and equal opportunity. Lord Gaurāṅga's message of *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva,* or inconceivable simultaneous oneness and difference, offers to all living beings an equal opportunity to attain the perfection of happiness while remaining individual and unique.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu advised us:

yāre dekha, tāre kaha
'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa
āmāra ājñāya guru hañā
tāra' ei deśa

"One should simply instruct everyone he meets regarding the principles of *kṛṣṇa-kathā* [topics of Kṛṣṇa], as expressed in *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.*" (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 7.128) Lord Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* that human society has four natural divisions, or *varṇas*: intellectuals, administrators, merchants, and workers. The propensities of the members of these divisions always exist. Legislation and socio-political manipulation cannot eliminate nature's varieties. If it were true that everyone is equal, then why do Cambridge, Oxford, Harvard, IIT, and every other educational institution hold entrance exams? Why do they not simply offer a place to anyone who walks through the door?

Hari Śauri Dāsa

Everyone is not created equal. What then of our attempts to find a platform of mutual respect and harmony? Where does the commonality of living beings lie?

The answer is given by Lord Kṛṣṇa. He describes two natures at work in this phenomenal world. One is temporary and subject to constant flux and change:

bhūmir āpo 'nalo vāyuḥ
khaṁ mano buddhir eva ca
ahaṅkāra itīyaṁ me
bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā

"Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and false ego—all together these eight constitute My separated material energies." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 7.4) And the other is permanent and changeless:

apareyam itas tv anyāṁ
prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām
jīva-bhūtāṁ mahā-bāho
yayedaṁ dhāryate jagat

"Besides these, O mighty-armed Arjuna, there is another, superior energy of Mine, which comprises the living entities who are exploiting the resources of this material, inferior nature." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 7.5)

We living beings are not temporary manifestations of chance combinations of matter. Consciousness is the cause of the material phenomena, not its effect. Consciousness is eternal and original and exists even when the material realm is wound up.

As eternal living beings we are embedded within material nature and struggling within its midst. We acquire a variety of material bodies in an endless cycle of repeated birth and death, entering into and then exiting one cadaver after another.

The *Vedas* say that there are 8,400,000 varieties of life, ranging through aquatic life, plants, insects, birds, animals, human beings, and above. The embodied *ātmā,* or soul, superficially acquires a certain nature according to the body he currently occupies. Further, even within the same species, every soul is individual and unique. Thus none can be said to be equal in every respect, and the pursuit of equality therefore is seemingly futile.

As Lord Kṛṣṇa says,

sadṛśaṁ ceṣṭate svasyāḥ
prakṛter jñānavān api
prakṛtiṁ yānti bhūtāni
nigrahaḥ kiṁ kariṣyati

"Even a man of knowledge acts according to his own nature, for everyone follows the nature he has acquired from the three modes. What can repression accomplish?" (*Bhagavad-gītā* 3.33) Yet, after

(*please turn to page 57*)

BOOK SECTION: ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

Referred to as “the ripe fruit of the tree of Vedic literature,” *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most complete and authoritative exposition of Vedic knowledge. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa,* or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. Here we present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in serialized form, with the original Sanskrit text, transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

KUVERA OFFERS DHRUVA A BENEDICTION

After noting Dhruva Mahārāja’s reputation as a pure devotee of the Lord, Kuvera offers to give Dhruva anything he desires.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 12

7 वृणीहि कामं नृप यन्मनोगतं
मत्तस्त्वमौत्तानपदेऽविशङ्कितः
वरं वरार्होऽम्बुजनाभपादयो-
रनन्तरं त्वां वयमङ्ग शुश्रुम

vṛṇīhi kāmaṁ nṛpa yan mano-gataṁ
mattas tvam auttānapade ’viśaṅkitaḥ
varaṁ varārho ’mbuja-nābha-pādayor
anantaraṁ tvāṁ vayam aṅga śuśruma

vṛṇīhi—please ask; *kāmam*—desire; *nṛpa*—O King; *yat*—whatever; *manaḥ-gatam*—within your mind; *mattaḥ*—from me; *tvam*—you; *auttānapade*—O son of Mahārāja Uttānapāda; *aviśaṅkitaḥ*—without hesitation; *varam*—benediction; *vara-arhaḥ*—worthy to take benedictions; *ambuja*—lotus flower; *nābha*—whose navel; *pādayoḥ*—at His lotus feet; *anantaram*—constantly; *tvām*—about you; *vayam*—we; *aṅga*—dear Dhruva; *śuśruma*—have heard.

My dear Dhruva Mahārāja, son of Mahārāja Uttānapāda, we have heard that you are constantly engaged in transcendental loving service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is known for His lotus navel. You are therefore worthy to take all benedictions from us. Please, therefore, ask without hesitation whatever benediction you want from me.

PURPORT: Dhruva Mahārāja, the son of King Uttānapāda, was already known throughout the universe as a great devotee of the Lord, constantly thinking of His lotus feet. Such a pure, uncontaminated devotee of the Lord is worthy to have all the benedictions that can be offered by the demigods. He does not have to worship the demigods separately for such benedictions. Kuvera is the treasurer of the demigods, and he is personally offering whatever benediction Dhruva Mahārāja would like to have from him.

① Śrīla Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura stated, therefore, that for persons who engage in the devotional service of the Lord, all material benedictions wait like maidservants. Mukti-devī is just waiting at the door of the devotee to offer liberation, or more than that, at any time. To be a

(1) What did Śrīla Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura say about material benedictions and liberation for persons engaged in the devotional service of the Lord?

devotee is therefore an exalted position. Simply by rendering transcendental loving service unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one can have all the benedictions of the world without separate endeavor.

② Lord Kuvera said to Dhruva Mahārāja that he had heard that Dhruva was always in *samādhi,* or thinking of the lotus feet of the Lord. In other words, he knew that for Dhruva Mahārāja there was nothing desirable within the three material worlds. He knew that Dhruva would ask for nothing but to remember the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord constantly.

मैत्रेय उवाच
8 स राजराजेन वराय चोदितो
ध्रुवो महाभागवतो महामतिः
हरौ स वव्रेऽचलितां स्मृतिं यया
तरत्ययत्नेन दुरत्ययं तमः

maitreya uvāca
sa rāja-rājena varāya codito
dhruvo mahā-bhāgavato mahā-matiḥ
harau sa vavre 'calitāṁ smṛtiṁ yayā
taraty ayatnena duratyayaṁ tamaḥ

maitreyaḥ uvāca—the great sage Maitreya said; *saḥ*—he; *rāja-rājena*—by the king of kings (Kuvera); *varāya*—for a benediction; *coditaḥ*—being asked; *dhruvaḥ*—Dhruva Mahārāja; *mahā-bhāgavataḥ*—a first-class pure devotee; *mahā-matiḥ*—most intelligent or thoughtful; *harau*—unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *saḥ*—he; *vavre*—asked; *acalitām*—unflinching; *smṛtim*—remembrance; *yayā*—by which; *tarati*—crosses over; *ayatnena*—without difficulty; *duratyayam*—unsurpassable; *tamaḥ*—nescience.

The great sage Maitreya continued: My dear Vidura, when thus asked to accept a benediction from Kuvera the Yakṣarāja [King of the Yakṣas], ③ Dhruva Mahārāja, that most elevated pure devotee, who was an intelligent and thoughtful king, begged that he might have unflinching faith in and remembrance of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, for thus a person can cross over the ocean of nescience very easily, although it is very difficult for others to cross.

(2) What did Kuvera say he had heard about Dhruva Mahārāja?
(3) What benediction did Dhruva Mahārāja ask for?
(4) What are the four principles known as *catur-vargas*?
(5) What is the stage of life called *pañcama-puruṣārtha*?
(6) According to Śrīla Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī, what is the devotee's attitude toward (a) liberation, (b) the heavenly planets, and (c) the endeavor to control the senses?
(7) What is Kuvera's business, and why is he called "the king of kings"?

PURPORT: According to the opinion of expert followers of Vedic rites, ④ there are different types of benedictions in terms of religiosity, economic development, sense gratification, and liberation. These four principles are known as *catur-vargas.* Of all the *catur-vargas,* the benediction of liberation is considered to be the highest in this material world. To be enabled to cross over material nescience is known as the highest *puruṣārtha,* or benediction for the human being. But Dhruva Mahārāja wanted a benediction which surpasses even the highest *puruṣārtha,* liberation. He wanted the benediction that he might constantly remember the lotus feet of the Lord. ⑤ This stage of life is called *pañcama-puruṣārtha.* When a devotee comes to the platform of *pañcama-puruṣārtha,* simply engaging in devotional service to the Lord, the fourth *puruṣārtha,* liberation, becomes very insignificant in his eyes.

⑥ Śrīla Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī has stated in this connection that for a devotee liberation is a hellish condition of life; as for sense gratification, which is available in the heavenly planets, the devotee considers it to be a will-o'-the-wisp, having no value in life. Yogis endeavor to control the senses, but for a devotee controlling the senses is no difficulty at all. The senses are compared to serpents, but for a devotee the serpents' poison teeth are broken. Thus Śrīla Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī has analyzed all kinds of benedictions available in this world, and he has clearly declared that for a pure devotee they are all of no significance.

Dhruva Mahārāja was also a *mahā-bhāgavata,* or a first-class pure devotee, and his intelligence was very great (*mahā-matiḥ*). Unless one is very intelligent, one cannot take to devotional service, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Naturally, anyone who is a first-class devotee must be a first-class intelligent person and therefore not interested in any kind of benediction within this material world. Dhruva Mahārāja was offered a benediction by the king of the kings. ⑦ Kuvera, the treasurer of the demigods, whose only business is to supply immense riches to persons within this materialistic world, is described as the king of kings because unless one is blessed by Kuvera one cannot become a king. The king of kings personally offered Dhruva Mahārāja any amount of riches, but he declined to accept them. He is described, therefore, as *mahā-matiḥ,* very thoughtful, or highly intellectual.

9 तस्य प्रीतेन मनसा तां दत्त्वैडविडस्ततः
पश्यतोऽन्तर्दधे सोऽपि स्वपुरं प्रत्यपद्यत

tasya prītena manasā
tāṁ dattvaiḍaviḍas tataḥ

paśyato 'ntardadhe so 'pi
sva-puraṁ pratyapadyata

tasya—with Dhruva; *prītena*—being very pleased; *manasā*—with such a mentality; *tām*—that remembrance; *dattvā*—having given; *aiḍaviḍaḥ*—Kuvera, son of Iḍaviḍā; *tataḥ*—thereafter; *paśyataḥ*—while Dhruva was looking on; *antardadhe*—disappeared; *saḥ*—he (Dhruva); *api*—also; *sva-puram*—to his city; *pratyapadyata*—returned.

The son of Iḍaviḍā, Lord Kuvera, was very pleased, and happily he gave Dhruva Mahārāja the benediction he wanted. Thereafter he disappeared from Dhruva's presence, and Dhruva Mahārāja returned to his capital city.

PURPORT: ⑧ Kuvera, who is known as the son of Iḍaviḍā, was very pleased with Dhruva Mahārāja because he did not ask him for anything materially enjoyable. Kuvera is one of the demigods, so one may put forward the argument, ⑨ "Why did Dhruva Mahārāja take a benediction from a demigod?" The answer is that for a Vaiṣṇava there is no objection to taking a benediction from a demigod if it is favorable for advancing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The *gopīs,* for example, worshiped Kātyāyanī, a demigoddess, but the only benediction they wanted from the goddess was to have Kṛṣṇa as their husband. A Vaiṣṇava is not interested in asking any benediction from the demigods, nor is he interested in asking benedictions from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is said in the *Bhāgavatam* that liberation can be offered by the Supreme Person, but even if a pure devotee is offered liberation by the Supreme Lord, he refuses to accept it. Dhruva Mahārāja did not ask Kuvera for transference to the spiritual world, which is called liberation; he simply asked that wherever he would remain—whether in the spiritual or material world—he would always remember the Supreme Personality of Godhead. A Vaiṣṇava is always respectful to everyone. So when Kuvera offered him a benediction, he did not refuse it. But he wanted something which would be favorable to his advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

10 अथायजत यज्ञेशं क्रतुभिर्भूरिदक्षिणैः
द्रव्यक्रियादेवतानां कर्म कर्मफलप्रदम्

athāyajata yajñeśaṁ
kratubhir bhūri-dakṣiṇaiḥ
dravya-kriyā-devatānāṁ
karma karma-phala-pradam

atha—thereafter; *ayajata*—he worshiped; *yajña-īśam*—the master of sacrifices; *kratubhiḥ*—by sacrificial ceremonies; *bhūri*—great; *dakṣiṇaiḥ*—by charities; *dravya-kriyā-devatānām*—of (sacrifices including various) paraphernalia, activities, and demigods; *karma*—the objective; *karma-phala*—the result of activities; *pradam*—who awards.

As long as he remained at home, Dhruva Mahārāja performed many great ceremonial sacrifices in order to please the enjoyer of all sacrifices, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Prescribed ceremonial sacrifices are especially meant to please Lord Viṣṇu, who is the objective of all such sacrifices and who awards the resultant benedictions.

PURPORT: In *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.9) it is said, *yajñārthāt karmaṇo 'nyatra loko 'yaṁ karma-bandhanaḥ:* one should act or work only in order to please the Supreme Lord, otherwise one becomes entangled in the resultant reactions. ⑩ According to the four divisions of *varṇa* and *āśrama, kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas* are especially advised to perform great ceremonial sacrifices and to distribute their accumulated money very liberally. Dhruva Mahārāja, as a king and ideal *kṣatriya,* performed many such sacrifices, giving very liberally in charity. *Kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas* are supposed to earn their money and accumulate great riches. Sometimes they do it by acting sinfully. *Kṣatriyas* are meant to rule over a country; Dhruva Mahārāja, for example, in the course of ruling, had to fight and kill many Yakṣas. Such action is necessary for *kṣatriyas.* ⑪ A *kṣatriya* should not be a coward, and he should not be nonviolent; to rule over the country he has to act violently.

Kṣatriyas and *vaiśyas* are therefore especially advised to give in charity at least fifty percent of their accumulated wealth. In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is recommended that even though one enters the renounced order of life, he still cannot give up the performance of *yajña, dāna,* and *tapasya.* They are never to be given up. *Tapasya* is meant for the renounced order of life; those who are retired from worldly activities should perform *tapasya,* penances and austerities. Those who are in the material world, the *kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas,* must give charity. *Brahmacārīs,* in the beginning of their lives, should perform different kinds of *yajñas.*

Dhruva Mahārāja, as an ideal king, practically emptied his treasury by giving charity. A king is not meant simply to realize taxes from the citizens and accumulate wealth to spend in sense gratification. ⑫ World monarchy has failed ever since kings began to satisfy their personal senses with the taxes accumulated from the citizens. Of course, whether the system is monarchy or democracy, the same corruption is still going on. At the present moment there are different parties in the democratic government, but everyone is busy trying to keep his post

(8) Why was Kuvera pleased with Dhruva?
(9) Why did Dhruva, a Vaiṣṇava, take a benediction from Kuvera, a demigod?
(10) Which *varṇas* are especially advised to perform great ceremonial sacrifices and to distribute their accumulated money very liberally?
(11) Why should a *kṣatriya* not be nonviolent?
(12) Why did world monarchy fail?

or trying to keep his political party in power. The politicians have very little time to think of the welfare of the citizens, whom they oppress with heavy taxes in the form of income tax, sales tax and many other taxes—people sometimes have eighty to ninety percent of their income taken away, and these taxes are lavishly spent for the high salaries drawn by the officers and rulers.

Formerly, the taxes accumulated from the citizens were spent for performing great sacrifices as enjoined in the Vedic literature. At the present moment, however, almost all forms of sacrifice are not possible; therefore, it is recommended in the *śāstras* that people perform *saṅkīrtana-yajña.* Any householder, regardless of his position, can perform this *saṅkīrtana-yajña* without expenditure. All the family members can sit down together and simply clap their hands and chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra.* Somehow or other, everyone can manage to perform such a *yajña* and distribute *prasāda* to the people in general. That is quite sufficient for this age of Kali.

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is based on this principle: chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra at every moment, as much as possible, both inside and outside of the temples, and, as far as possible, distribute *prasāda.* This process can be accelerated with the cooperation of state administrators and those who are producing the country's wealth. Simply by liberal distribution of *prasāda* and *saṅkīrtana,* the whole world can become peaceful and prosperous.

Generally in all the material sacrifices recommended in the Vedic literature there are offerings to the demigods. This demigod worship is especially meant for less intelligent men. Actually, the result of such sacrifice goes to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa. ⑬ Lord Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (5.29), *bhoktāraṁ yajña-tapasām:* He is actually the enjoyer of all sacrifices. His name, therefore, is Yajña-puruṣa.

Although Dhruva Mahārāja was a great devotee and had nothing to do with these sacrifices, to set an example to his people he performed many sacrifices and gave all his wealth in charity. For as long as he lived as a householder, he never spent a farthing for his sense gratification. In this verse the word *karma-phala-pradam* is very significant. The Lord awards everyone different kinds of karma as the individual living entities desire; He is the Supersoul present within the heart of everyone, and He is so kind and liberal that He gives everyone full facilities to perform whatever acts one wants. Then the result of the action is also enjoyed by the living entity. If anyone wants to enjoy or lord it over material nature, the Lord gives him full facilities, but he becomes entangled in the resultant reactions. Similarly, if anyone wants to engage himself fully in devotional service, the Lord gives him full facilities, and the devotee enjoys the results. The Lord is therefore known as *karma-phala-prada.*

(13) Why is one of Kṛṣṇa's names Yajña-puruṣa?

11 सर्वात्मन्यच्युतेऽसर्वे तीव्रौघां भक्तिमुद्वहन्
ददर्शात्मनि भूतेषु तमेवावस्थितं विभुम्

sarvātmany acyute 'sarve
tīvraughāṁ bhaktim udvahan
dadarśātmani bhūteṣu
tam evāvasthitaṁ vibhum

sarva-ātmani—unto the Supersoul; *acyute*—infallible; *asarve*—without any limit; *tīvra-oghām*—with unrelenting force; *bhaktim*—devotional service; *udvahan*—rendering; *dadarśa*—he saw; *ātmani*—in the Supreme Spirit; *bhūteṣu*—in all living entities; *tam*—Him; *eva*—only; *avasthitam*—situated; *vibhum*—all-powerful.

Dhruva Mahārāja rendered devotional service unto the Supreme, the reservoir of everything, with unrelenting force. While carrying out his devotional service to the Lord, he could see that everything is situated in Him only and that He is situated in all living entities. The Lord is called Acyuta because He never fails in His prime duty, to give protection to His devotees.

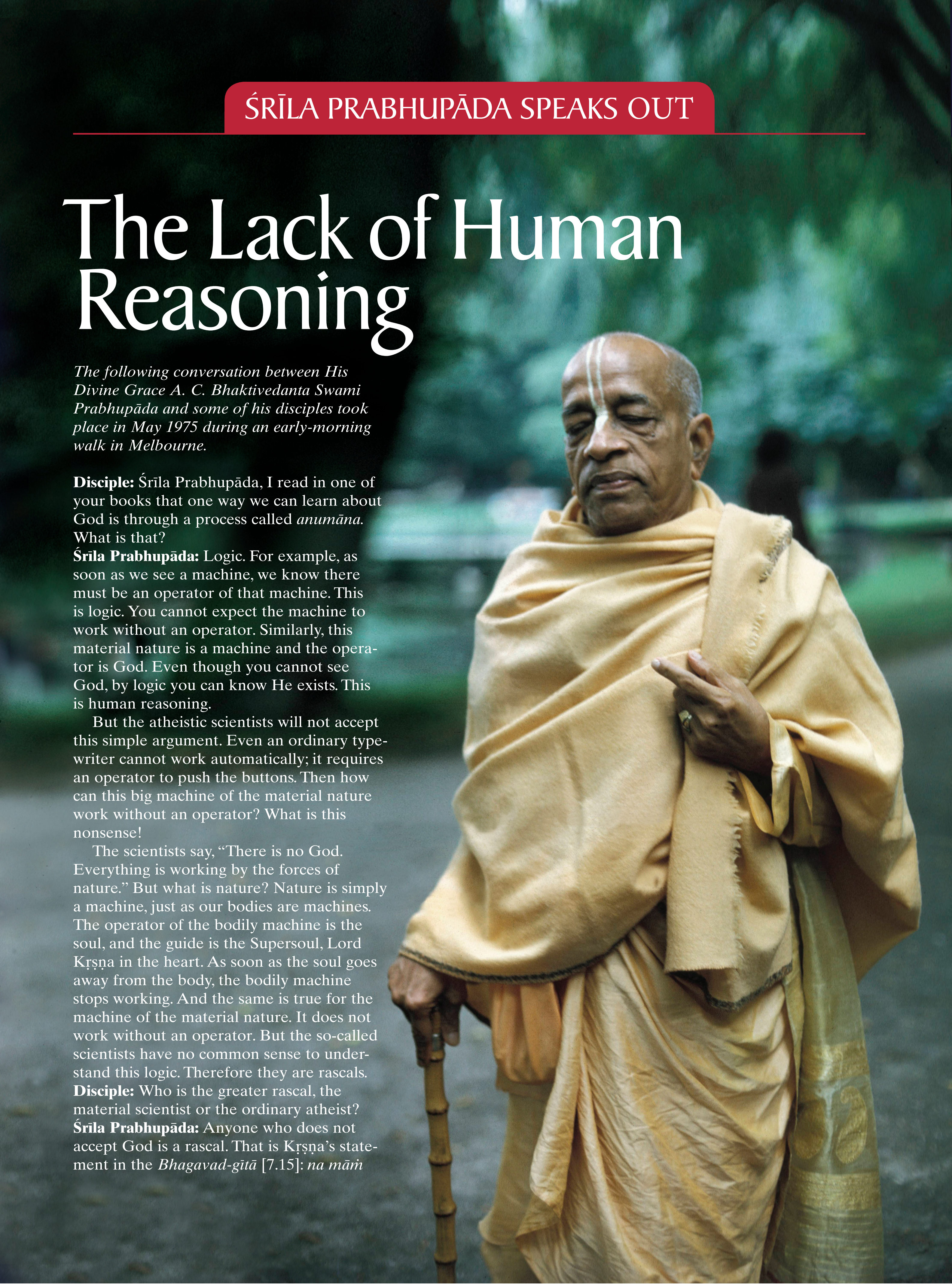
PURPORT: Not only did Dhruva Mahārāja perform many sacrifices, but he carried on his transcendental occupation of engagement in the devotional service of the Lord. The ordinary *karmīs,* who want to enjoy the results of fruitive activities, are concerned only with sacrifices and ritualistic ceremonies as enjoined in the Vedic *śāstras.* Although Dhruva Mahārāja performed many sacrifices in order to be an exemplary king, he was constantly engaged in devotional service. The Lord always protects His surrendered devotee. A devotee can see that the Lord is situated in everyone's heart, as stated in the *Gītā* (*īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānāṁ hṛd-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati*). Ordinary persons cannot understand how the Supreme Lord is situated in everyone's heart, but a devotee can actually see Him. Not only can the devotee see Him outwardly, but he can see, with spiritual vision, that everything is resting in the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as described in *Bhagavad-gītā* (*mat-sthāni sarva-bhūtāni*). That is the vision of a *mahā-bhāgavata.* He sees everything others see, but instead of seeing merely the trees, the mountains, the cities or the sky, he sees only his worshipable Supreme Personality of Godhead in everything because everything is resting in Him only. This is the vision of the *mahā-bhāgavata.* In summary, a *mahā-bhāgavata,* a highly elevated pure devotee, sees the Lord everywhere, as well as within the heart of everyone. This is possible for devotees who have developed elevated devotional service to the Lord. As stated in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.38), *premāñjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena:* only those who have smeared their eyes with the ointment of love of Godhead can see everywhere the Supreme Lord face to face; it is not possible by imagination or so-called meditation.

(*Continued in the next issue.*)

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

The Lack of Human Reasoning

The following conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and some of his disciples took place in May 1975 during an early-morning walk in Melbourne.



Disciple: Śrīla Prabhupāda, I read in one of your books that one way we can learn about God is through a process called *anumāna.* What is that?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Logic. For example, as soon as we see a machine, we know there must be an operator of that machine. This is logic. You cannot expect the machine to work without an operator. Similarly, this material nature is a machine and the operator is God. Even though you cannot see God, by logic you can know He exists. This is human reasoning.

But the atheistic scientists will not accept this simple argument. Even an ordinary typewriter cannot work automatically; it requires an operator to push the buttons. Then how can this big machine of the material nature work without an operator? What is this nonsense!

The scientists say, “There is no God. Everything is working by the forces of nature.” But what is nature? Nature is simply a machine, just as our bodies are machines. The operator of the bodily machine is the soul, and the guide is the Supersoul, Lord Kṛṣṇa in the heart. As soon as the soul goes away from the body, the bodily machine stops working. And the same is true for the machine of the material nature. It does not work without an operator. But the so-called scientists have no common sense to understand this logic. Therefore they are rascals.

Disciple: Who is the greater rascal, the material scientist or the ordinary atheist?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Anyone who does not accept God is a rascal. That is Kṛṣṇa’s statement in the *Bhagavad-gītā* [7.15]: *na māṁ* *duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ prapadyante narādhamāḥ.* Who doesn't recognize God? Those who are sinful rascals, the lowest of mankind.

Now, someone may say, "No, the scientists are so educated." But that education is false education. Real education means to understand God. *Vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyaḥ.*

If one does not understand God, his education is useless. It has no meaning. When someone claims to be educated, we should simply ask, "Will that education save him from death?" If not, then what is the value of his education? Our real problems are birth, old age, disease, and death. Can materialistic education solve these problems? Can the scientists stop anyone from growing old? Nobody wants to become old; everyone wants to keep himself youthful. But no scientist can stop old age. Then what is the value of the scientists' education? We acquire an education so we can solve our problems. The scientists are solving only temporary problems, but they cannot solve the ultimate problems. Therefore their education is useless. *Śrama eva hi kevalam:* it is simply hard labor for nothing. That's all.

Disciple: The leaders seem to have adopted a stopgap policy. They keep the people in ignorance and fool them into believing progress is being made, when actually it's not. In this way the leaders can maintain their position.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, the blind leading the blind: *andhā yathāndhair upanīyamānāḥ.* The leaders tell the people that by material adjustments they will be happy. But that is not possible. Still, the people are such fools that they do not think, "Where is the solution to my problems? You have given me the chance to live in a skyscraper building, but is that the solution to the problems of birth, old age, disease, and death?" No one has brain enough to ask this question.

Everyone is trying to save himself from disease, from old age, from death. Why do people go to a physician as soon as there is some disease?

Disciple: They want to get well.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. And ultimately, they do not want to die. But even if you have the best physician, death will eventually come in any case. Then where is the solution to the problem of death?

Still, people accept science as the solution to all their problems. Therefore the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [2.3.19] says, *śva-viḍ-varāhoṣṭra-kharaiḥ saṁstutaḥ puruṣaḥ paśuḥ.* "Those who are like dogs, hogs, camels, and asses praise leaders who are also like animals." Both the leaders and their followers are animals; none of them is a human being. The big animal bluffs, "I have done so much for you, and I promise to do more. Give me your vote." And the small animal thinks, "Yes, he has done so much for me. Let me vote for him." This is going on. *Andhā yathāndhaiḥ:* one blind man is leading other blind men. What is the use? If I am blind and I say, "Come follow me and I shall take you to Melbourne," as soon as we go in the road, I will be killed and you will also be killed. That's all.

Disciple: Śrīla Prabhupāda, sometimes when we tell people this life is full of miseries, they say, "What do you mean? There are high points and low points, but basically I am a happy person."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is their foolishness. They cannot distinguish misery from happiness. They are being kicked by material nature, the agent of Kṛṣṇa. Because they desire in various ways to become controllers or enjoyers, they are being offered various types of bodies and suffering repeated birth and death. But because people have no sense, they think this material life is pleasurable.

Now, as Australians, you may have so many nice facilities, but you cannot enjoy them perpetually. By the force of nature you will have to change your position. Today you may be living in a nice apartment, and tomorrow you may become a rat in that apartment. It is not in your power to change the strong laws of nature. You must change your position.

Actually, everyone is being controlled by the material nature at every moment. So an intelligent person asks how to get out of this material nature, how to end the suffering of repeated birth, old age, disease, and death. And Kṛṣṇa explains how to end this suffering in *Bhagavad-gītā* [7.14]: *māṁ eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te.* "As soon as the rascal surrenders to Me, he is out of the control of My material nature."

How to Put BTG in Your Will

After providing for their families and loved ones, subscribers may want to put *Back to Godhead* in their wills, thus helping to assure the long-term future of this work. In the USA, bequests are free of estate tax and can substantially reduce the amount of your assets claimed by the government.* You can give needed support for *Back to Godhead* by simply including the following words in your will: *I give, devise, and bequeath to* Back to Godhead, *18024 NW 112th Blvd., Alachua, FL 32615* (insert amount being given here) *to be used to support* Back to Godhead *and its related activities, including the Krishna.com website.*

A bequest can be a specific dollar amount, a specific piece of property, a percentage of an estate, or all or part of the residue of an estate. You can also name BTG as a contingency beneficiary in the event someone named in your will is no longer living.

It is recommended that a lawyer help in drafting or amending a will.

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*If you live outside the USA, check the estate tax laws for your country.

CALENDAR

*This calendar is calculated for Mayapur, West Bengal, India. The dates, derived from a lunar calendar, may vary by one day for other locations. For the exact dates for your area, go to **www.krishnadays.com**.*

Because the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement comes in disciplic line from Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the calendar includes not only dates relevant to all followers of the Vedic tradition but also dates relating to Lord Caitanya's associates and prominent spiritual masters in His disciplic succession.

August 18–September 16

(*Month of Puruṣottama-adhikā*)

27—Padminī Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

SEPTEMBER

12—Paramā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

September 17–30

(*Month of Hṛṣīkeśa*)

20—Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Sītā Devī, the consort of Śrīla Advaita Ācārya.

23—Śrī Rādhāṣṭamī, appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal consort. Fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

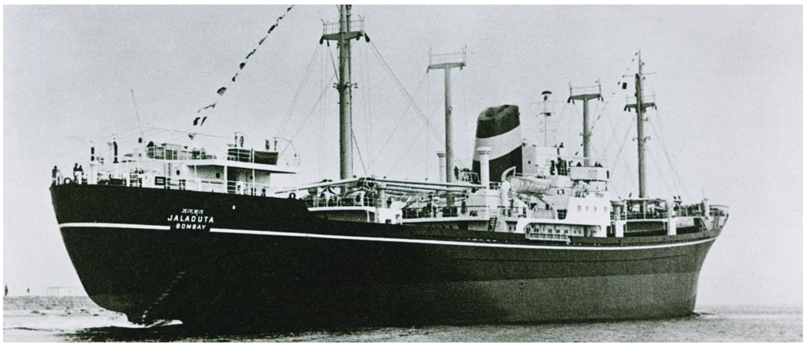
26—Parśvā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans. Half-day fast for the appearance of Śrī Vāmanadeva (tomorrow).

27—Śrī Vāmana-dvādaśī, appearance anniversary of Lord Vāmana, Lord Kṛṣṇa's incarnation as a dwarf *brāhmaṇa*. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, one of the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

28—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, father of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura (Prabhupāda's spiritual master), and a pioneer in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness in English. Fasting till noon, then feasting.

29—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura, foremost teacher of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

30—Anniversary of Śrīla Prabhupāda's accepting *sannyāsa,* the renounced order of life. Third month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from milk).



Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived in the US in 1965, aboard the Jaladuta.

October 1–29

(*Month of Padmanābha*)

OCTOBER

7—Anniversary of Śrīla Prabhupāda's arrival in the United States.

11—Indirā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

24—Rāmacandra Vijayotsava, the anniversary of Lord Rāmacandra's victory over the demon Rāvaṇa. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Madhvācārya, a Vaiṣṇava philosopher and spiritual master who appeared in the thirteenth century.

25—Pakṣavardhinī Mahā-dvādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans for Pāśāṅkuśā Ekādaśī.

26—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, and Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, great associates and followers of Lord Caitanya.

29—Śrī Kṛṣṇa Śāradīyā Rāsa-yātrā. Disappearance anniversary of Śrī Murāri Gupta, an associate of Lord Caitanya. Also, the fourth month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from *ūrad dāl*).

October 30–November 28

(*Month of Dāmodara*)

NOVEMBER

4—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura, a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa known for his Bengali devotional songs.

7—Appearance of Radha Kunda.

10—Ramā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

14—Diwali, the festival of illuminating Kṛṣṇa's temples with lamps. Govardhana Pūjā, the festival commemorating the worship of Govardhana Hill by the residents of Vṛndāvana and Kṛṣṇa's lifting the hill. Call your local Hare Kṛṣṇa temple for details.

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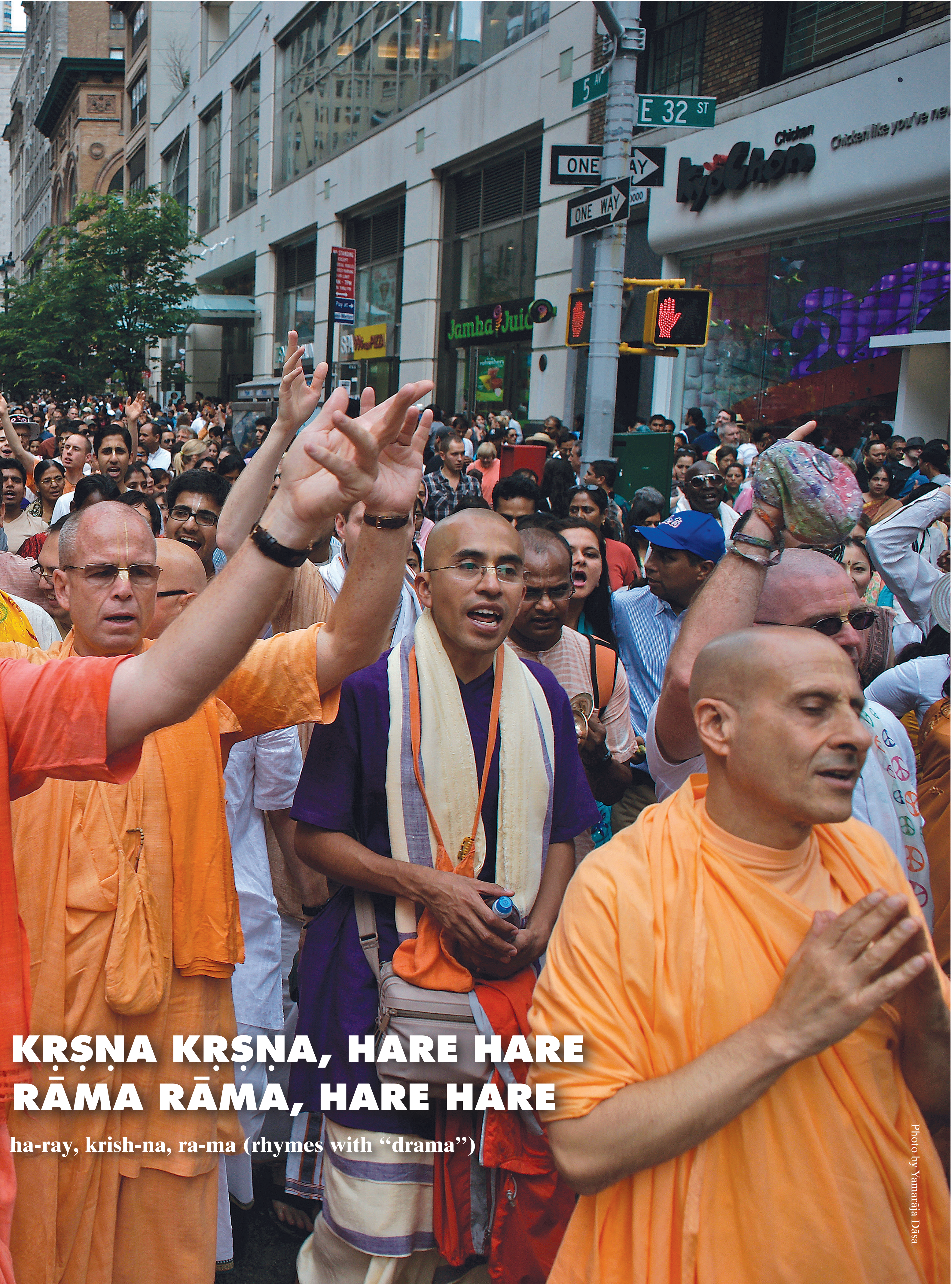
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KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA, HARE HARE RĀMA RĀMA, HARE HARE

ha-ray, krish-na, ra-ma (rhymes with "drama")

Photo by Yamarāja Dāsa

VERSES OF SURRENDER

The Carama-Ślokas Of the Śrī Vaiṣṇava Tradition

Great Vaiṣṇava teachers have selected certain scriptural verses as ultimate spiritual instructions.

By Satyarāja Dāsa

As devotees of Kṛṣṇa, we often study the Vedic literature with a great deal of seriousness. Over time, certain verses stand out as particularly significant, and they help us on the path of transcendence.

Recently, I have been studying the three *carama-ślokas* (“ultimate verses”) made popular by eminent followers of Rāmānuja (1017–1137), an important *ācārya* in the Śrī Vaiṣṇava tradition.

The first of these is found in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (*Yuddha-khaṇḍa* 18.34): “If anyone surrenders to Me even once (*sakṛd eva*), saying, ‘I am yours,’ I will protect that person in all circumstances. This is My promise.”

The context of the verse is as follows: When Vibhīṣaṇa, the younger brother of the demon Rāvaṇa, decides to turn against his own flesh and blood and seek refuge in Lord Rāma, the Lord’s associates become suspicious—except Hanumān, who knows Vibhīṣaṇa’s heart. Hanumān had met Vibhīṣaṇa in Rāvaṇa’s court after Hanumān’s earlier flight across the ocean to Lanka. Showing his favor toward Lord Rāma and His devotees, Vibhīṣaṇa had interceded when Rāvaṇa had ordered Hanumān killed.

Nonetheless, everyone in Rāma’s camp suspected that Vibhīṣaṇa’s defection was insincere and that he was probably acting as a spy on Rāvaṇa’s behalf. But Rāma and Hanumān knew better, and Rāma uttered the *carama-śloka* above, affirming that He will accept and protect anyone who comes to Him in a mood of full surrender (*śaraṇāgati*), as Vibhīṣaṇa had done.

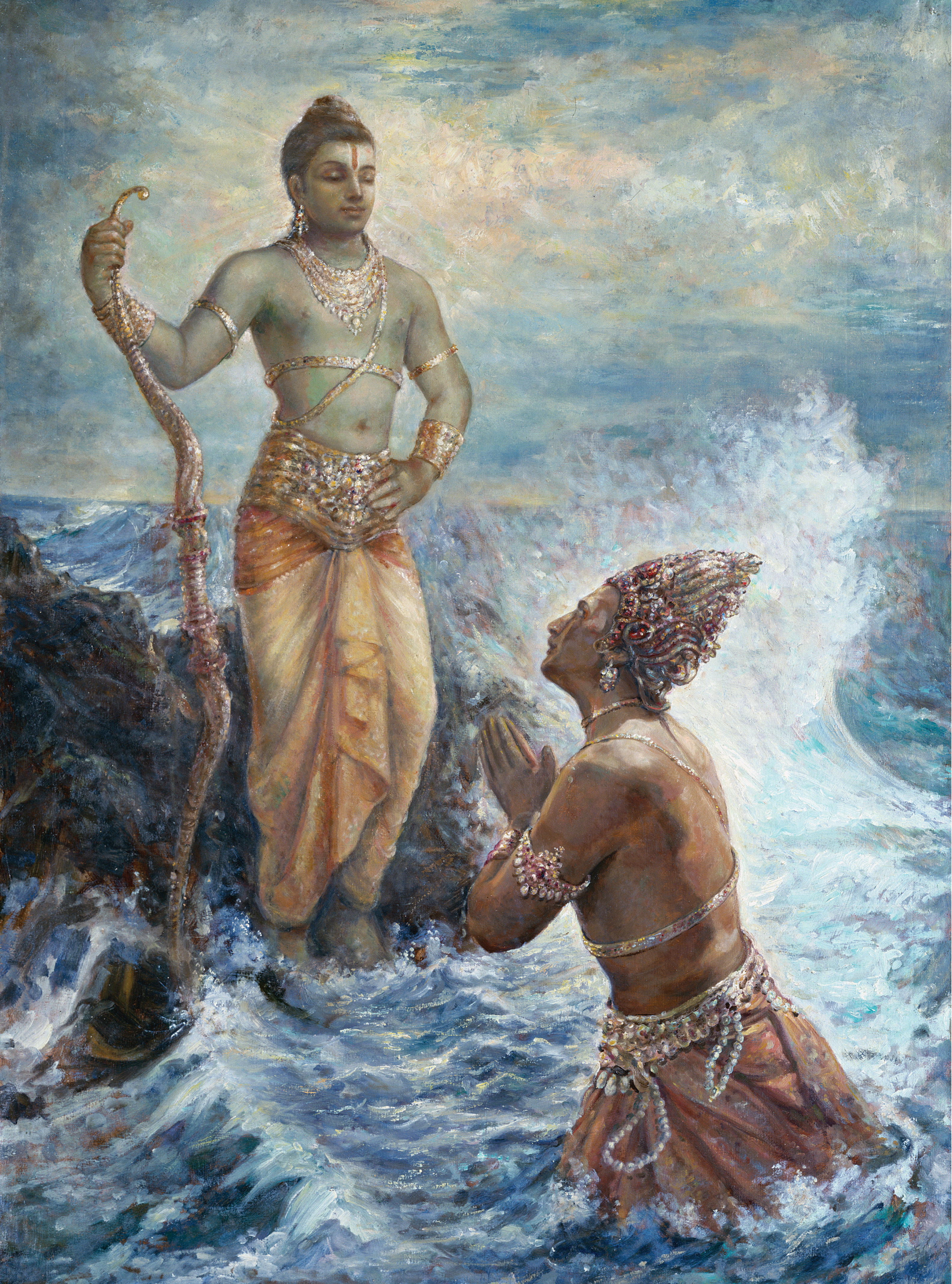
The next *carama-śloka* is from the *Varāha Purāṇa* (114.64–65), with Lord Varāha (Viṣṇu’s boar incarnation) making a similar proclamation about *śaraṇāgati* to His consort Bhūmi Devī, the predominating goddess of the Earth: “The entire universe is My body. Neither birth nor death has any effect on Me. When one gives oneself to Me [*śaraṇāgati*] with the firm belief that I am his everlasting support, I think of him at the time of his death and rush to his side even if he has no control over his senses, with his body appearing like a log or stone. I lead him then to My supreme abode, where he performs eternal service to Me.”

This verse emphasizes the reciprocal nature of love: Not only does the devotee love the Lord, but the Lord loves His devotee. The devotee remembers Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa in His kindness remembers His devotee, bringing him to the Supreme abode.

The final *carama-śloka* is the famous utterance of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66): “Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender [*śaraṇam,* i.e., *śaraṇāgati*] unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.”

*In an example of the mood of surrender (*śaraṇāgati*), Samudra, the ocean personified, prays to Lord Rāmacandra, “O great hero, although my water presents no impediment to Your going to Lanka, please construct a bridge over it to spread your transcendental fame.”*

Painting by Praśānta Dāsa



Śrīla Prabhupāda's commentary is illuminating:

> The Lord has described various kinds of knowledge and processes of religion—knowledge of the Supreme Brahman, knowledge of the Supersoul, knowledge of the different types of orders and statuses of social life, knowledge of the renounced order of life, knowledge of nonattachment, sense and mind control, meditation, etc. He has described in so many ways different types of religion. Now, in summarizing *Bhagavad-gītā,* the Lord says that Arjuna should give up all the processes that have been explained to him; he should simply surrender to Kṛṣṇa. That surrender will save him from all kinds of sinful reactions, for the Lord personally promises to protect him.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu taught that in the current age one surrenders to Kṛṣṇa by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*.

In Kṛṣṇa's words we see the same essential elements of the other two *carama-ślokas:* He asks for complete surrender (*śaraṇāgati*), assures reciprocation, and offers His devotee a sense of protection and well-being.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, two *ācāryas* in the Gauḍīya Sampradāya, the lineage to which the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement belongs, also consider this verse (18.66) the zenith of the *Bhagavad-gītā's* teaching, a culminating doctrine central to devotion to Kṛṣṇa. It behooves devotees, then, to look at the concept more thoroughly, for herein one finds the essence of spiritual thought.

How to Surrender

The question of just how to surrender looms large. Śrīla Prabhupāda often said that while Lord Kṛṣṇa asks for surrender in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* it took the appearance of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, some five hundred years ago, to show the method or practical application of this instruction. Mahāprabhu taught that in Kali-yuga, the current age of quarrel and hypocrisy, one surrenders to Kṛṣṇa by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* with other devotees under the direction of a bona fide spiritual master. This is the core of the surrendering process.

Ācāryas have detailed the characteristics of the surrendered soul. In Rāmānuja's branch of Vaiṣṇavism, known as the Śrī Sampradāya, *śaraṇāgati* is often referred to by its synonym *prapatti.* The Ālvārs and other saints in that lineage have written about it extensively. Rāmānuja explores it briefly in his work *Śaraṇāgati Gadyam,* a Sanskrit prayer regularly recited by devotees in the Śrī Vaiṣṇava tradition.

Augmenting the knowledge found there, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācārya* Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, the father of Śrīla Prabhupāda's guru, offers a clear articulation of *śaraṇāgati,* methodically outlining its characteristics in his poem of the same name:

> Out of compassion for the fallen souls, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya came to this world with His personal associates and divine abode to teach *śaraṇāgati,* surrender to the almighty Godhead, and to freely distribute ecstatic love of God, which is ordinarily very difficult to obtain. This *śaraṇāgati* is the very life of the true devotee.
>
> The ways of *śaraṇāgati* are humility, dedication of the self, acceptance of the Lord as one's only maintainer, faith that Kṛṣṇa will surely protect, execution of only those acts favorable to pure devotion, and renunciation of conduct adverse to pure devotion.
>
> The youthful son of Nanda Mahārāja, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, hears the prayers of anyone who takes refuge in Him by this six-fold practice.
>
> Bhaktivinoda places a straw between his teeth, prostrates himself before the two Gosvāmīs Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana, and clasps their lotus feet with his hands. "I am certainly the lowest of men," he tells them weeping, "but please make me the best of men by teaching me the ways of *śaraṇāgati.*"

The scriptural basis upon which Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura draws this information is the *Lakṣmī Tantra*. Many *ācāryas* have developed this same theme to clarify the various ways of surrender. For example, Vedānta Deśika (1269–1370) in the Śrī Vaiṣṇava tradition was the first to explore it methodically, summarizing six divisions of self-surrender (*ṣaḍ-aṅga prapatti*) in a clear and analytical way. Jīva Gosvāmī (1513–1608) then developed the idea in his *Bhāgavata Sandarbha*, and the idea was adapted by Bhaktivinoda as follows:

ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ: the acceptance of those things favorable to devotional service

prātikūlyasya varjanam: the rejection of unfavorable things

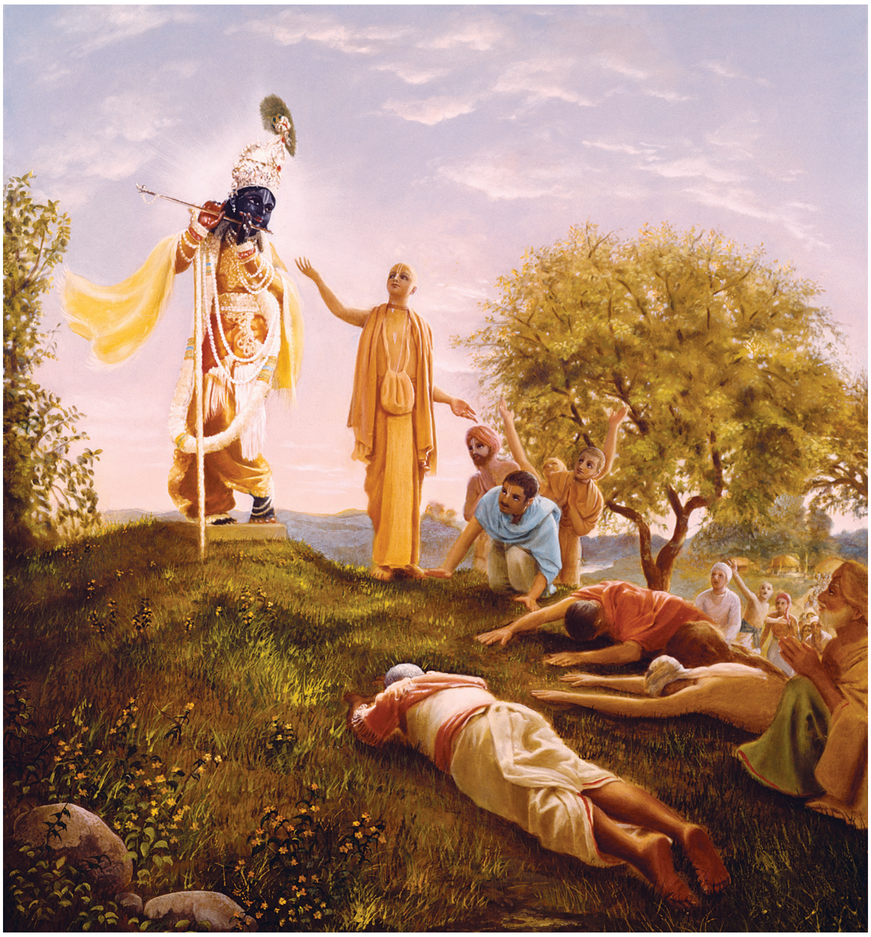
rakṣiṣyatīti viśvāsa: the conviction that Kṛṣṇa will give protection

goptṛtve varaṇam: the acceptance of the Lord as one's guardian or master

ātma-nikṣepa: full self-surrender

kārpaṇya: humility (Giving up all material ego and the false sense of who we are—and realizing that we are a spiritual spark, a minute part of the marginal potency [*taṭastha-śakti*] of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa—we should be humbler than a blade of grass.)

The law of surrender is fundamental to the spiritual enterprise. It


Painting by Muralidhara Dāsa

Residents of Vrindavan bow to the deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa who revealed Himself to His devotee Mādhavendra Purī.

asks us to move beyond our self-centered ideas about life and into God-centered ideas. This is not a sign of weakness but of strength. It is the recognition of our dependence on God, fostered by the realization that we are constitutionally His servants.

Every religion teaches this, in one way or another. In certain forms of Buddhism, for example, the first principle is "I take refuge in Lord Buddha" (*buddhaṁ śaraṇaṁ gacchāmi*). Notice the word *śaraṇam,* as in the *carama-ślokas.* And in Christianity we find the same principle: "Not my will, but Thine, be done." (Luke 22.42) This is the essence of the Christian tradition. Indeed, the Christian flag, which represents all of Christendom, has a white field with a red Latin cross inside a blue canton. In Western culture it is understood that a white flag is a sign of surrender, and here, according to Christian commentators, it is a reference to Jesus' nonviolence and surrender to God's will. Again, this is not a surrender of weakness—it symbolizes strength of purpose and the ability to humble oneself before God.

Draupadī's Example

An extraordinary example of spiritual surrender is found in the wife of the Pāṇḍavas, Draupadī, whose devotion is illustrated in the *Mahābhārata*. A complex series of events put her in the court of the Kauravas, the evil cousins of the Paṇḍavas, and the Kaurava Duḥśāsana tried to strip her naked. As he tugged on her sari, she prayed to Lord Kṛṣṇa. But while praying as Duḥśāsana pulled and pulled, she clung to her cloth. Her clinging symbolized a kind of holding back, which showed that her surrender was incomplete. Finally, she realized she could protect herself no longer, and she let go, throwing her arms in the air, totally giving herself to Kṛṣṇa's will ("Thy will be done"). As she did this, calling out His name, "piles of saris rushed to her rescue." Duḥśāsana found it impossible to denude her—because more and more cloth arose to protect her.

This is the way *śaraṇāgati* works. If we surrender with reservation, we get a commensurate result. But if we give our all, we get God.

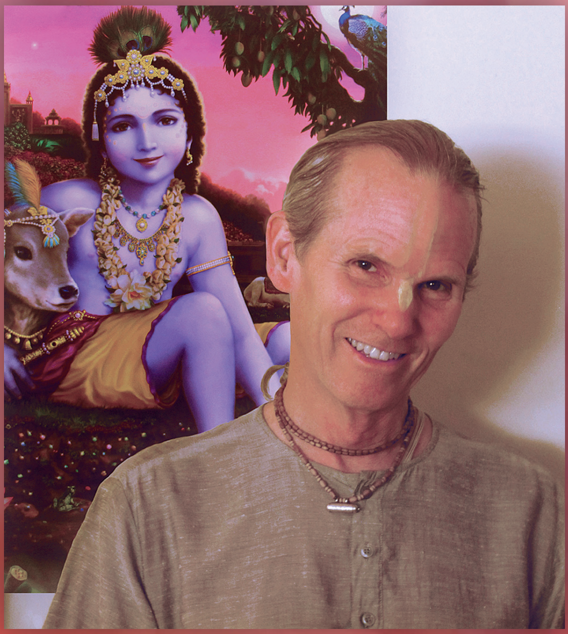
Indeed, the Vaiṣṇava sages teach that a completely surrendered soul has no cause for worry under any circumstances: the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa protects and sustains any and all surrendered souls, giving them just what they need to progress in spiritual life. The faithful devotee is not afraid to get his due, based on his karma and desire, and his main concern, always, is surrender to Kṛṣṇa, with heart and soul. This is the essence of *śaraṇāgati.*

Satyarāja Dāsa, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, is a BTG associate editor. He has written over twenty books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness and lives near New York City.

Our Only Business

Śaraṇāgati, surrender to Kṛṣṇa, is our only business. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is trying to teach people not to declare independence, which is not possible, nor to try to make this world happy without Kṛṣṇa. That is not possible. That is our propaganda. Whatever you do, take shelter of Kṛṣṇa, or God.

—*Śrīla Prabhupāda, Lecture, Los Angeles, February 9, 1969*



A Kṛṣṇa Art RENAISSANCE

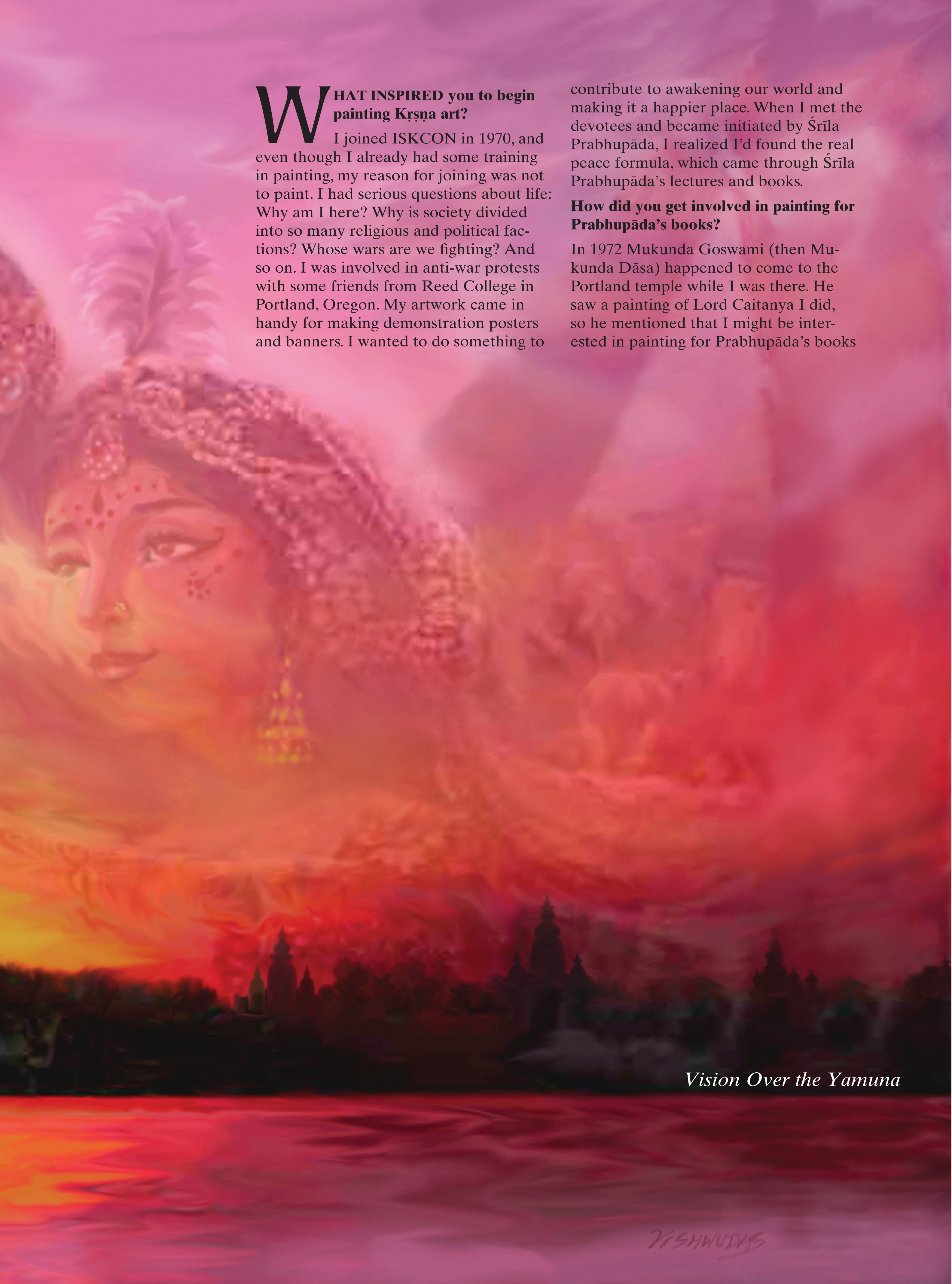
An interview with the artist Viṣṇu Dāsa conducted for BTG by Svahadevi Soni.

WHAT INSPIRED you to begin painting Kṛṣṇa art?

I joined ISKCON in 1970, and even though I already had some training in painting, my reason for joining was not to paint. I had serious questions about life: Why am I here? Why is society divided into so many religious and political factions? Whose wars are we fighting? And so on. I was involved in anti-war protests with some friends from Reed College in Portland, Oregon. My artwork came in handy for making demonstration posters and banners. I wanted to do something to contribute to awakening our world and making it a happier place. When I met the devotees and became initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda, I realized I'd found the real peace formula, which came through Śrīla Prabhupāda's lectures and books.

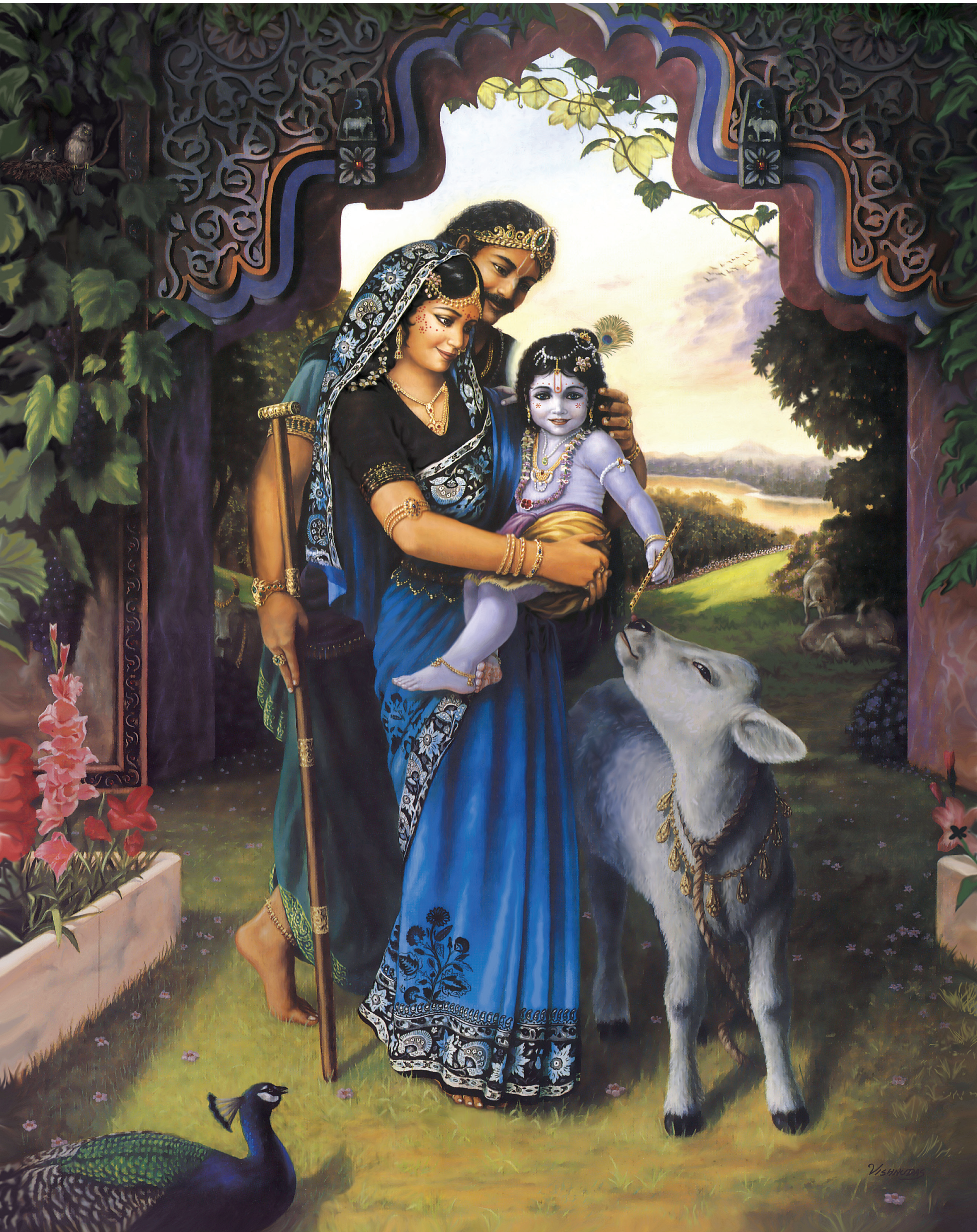
How did you get involved in painting for Prabhupāda's books?

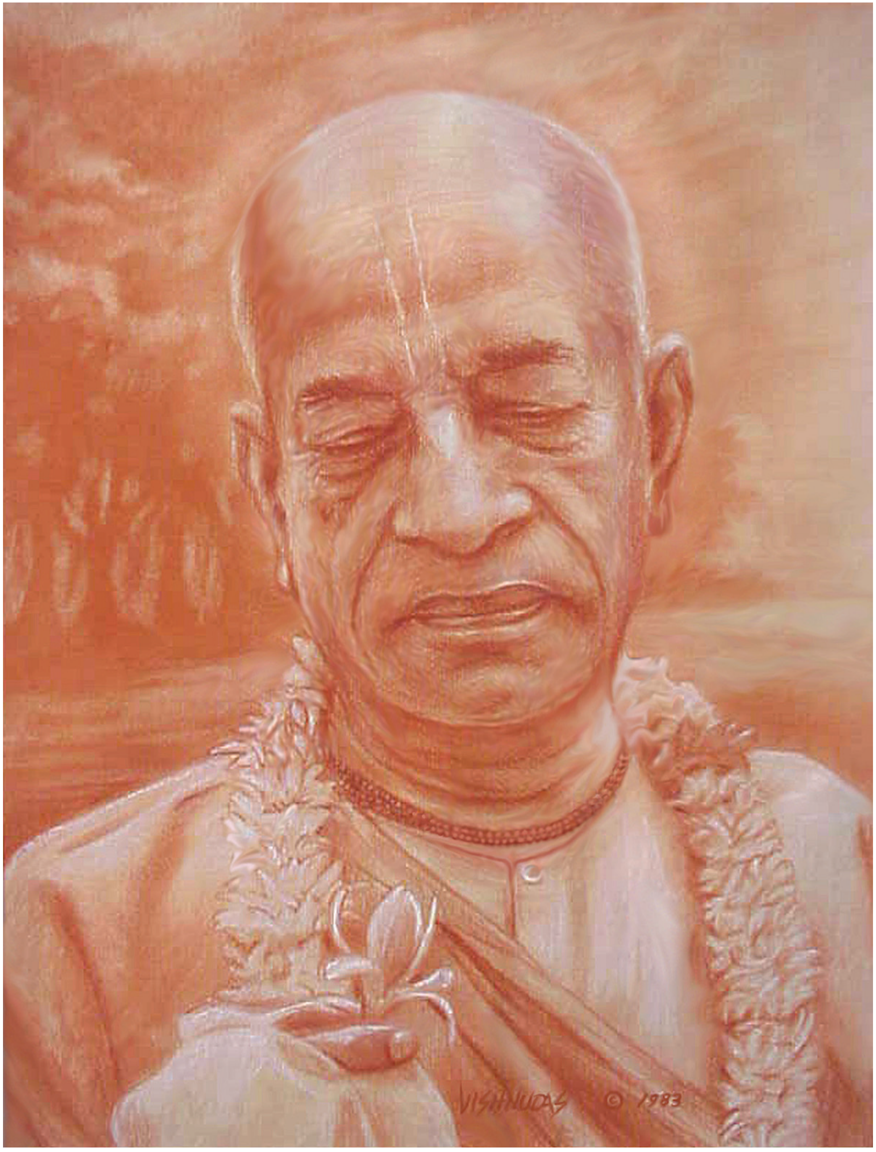
In 1972 Mukunda Goswami (then Mukunda Dāsa) happened to come to the Portland temple while I was there. He saw a painting of Lord Caitanya I did, so he mentioned that I might be interested in painting for Prabhupāda's books



Vision Over the Yamuna

The Divine Family





Śrīla Prabhupāda

in New York. I was excited about that idea, so I flew to New York and soon I was helping illustrate the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* series of books. I also began painting bigger canvas versions of the popular ISKCON artwork of the time. These were sent to temples starting up around the world.

Was it rigorous work to produce so many paintings?

Not really. It was my service to guru. Probably because I painted fast and could make big paintings look almost identical to the smaller originals, someone nicknamed me "the human camera." I always felt encouraged in the association of the other artists I worked with: Bharadrāja Dāsa, Parīkṣit Dāsa, Jadurāṇī Dāsī, Puṣkara Dāsa, and Muralīdhara Dāsa.

Did Śrīla Prabhupāda ever give you personal instructions or encouragement in your service of painting?

He would sometimes come to the Brooklyn temple and would be eager to see the artists' latest paintings. We would gather in his room, and I remember the first time he saw one of my paintings, the Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura painting, he smiled and said, "Very nice." We worked on many paintings like assembly line workers, each artist assigned to a particular part of each painting. Those paintings were not signed.

As time moved on we all made our own paintings and signed them. I got more into temple wall mural painting on a big scale.

In 1976 at the Manhattan temple Śrīla Prabhupāda saw my airbrushed murals of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes all around the temple walls. I had worked intensively on the last mural from 9:00 P.M. until 4:00 the next morning. I wanted to complete the final wall in the temple before Śrīla Prabhupāda came into the temple for *maṅgala-ārati.* So this new mural of Lord Caitanya dancing was of particular interest to him, as it hadn't been there the day before.

He stopped and said to the devotees there, "He has done this so fast?"

That morning on Śrīla Prabhupāda's walk with devotees he asked, "What is that boy's name who has done the paintings?"

A devotee said, "Viṣṇu Dāsa," and Śrīla Prabhupāda said," He should come to India and do paintings there."

I am paraphrasing, but he told the temple president to send me to India. Unfortunately, I was not on that walk with him, as I was exhausted after my mural marathon.

Please say something about your experience in India.

The most memorable experience there was speaking with Śrīla Prabhupāda a few times. I asked him the best way to paint Kṛṣṇa so that people realize that He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and a real person.

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "First understand that He is the most beautiful, the strongest, and never alone. He is always with His associates."

I asked if Kṛṣṇa could be shown with just some animals and trees, as these are mentioned as being also His associates.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Yes, even the trees, flowers, birds, and cows are all His devotees. You can paint them."

I asked if I should try to create better high-quality paintings.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explained, "You know the art. I have seen. But your service has no limit. So flood the world with these paintings, everywhere."

I was incredibly inspired by Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision of flooding the world with art about Kṛṣṇa and His pastimes. I felt like I was part of a great new renaissance of Kṛṣṇa art. I wanted to bring my Kṛṣṇa art to the next level, so to speak, so I began applying the techniques of the nineteenth-century masters, which was my background and favorite subject in art.

Prabhupāda called Kṛṣṇa paintings "windows to the spiritual world," so his vision helped his artists develop a style I like to call "transcendental realism." These windows to the spiritual world take you to a reality that transcends time, space, and place, beyond this objective world of our mundane sensual experience.

Is that why your "All-Attractive Couple" painting has such a quality of realism and detail?

That painting was my first limited-edition lithographic print, and yes, by then I was applying fine-art techniques of the masters to create it.

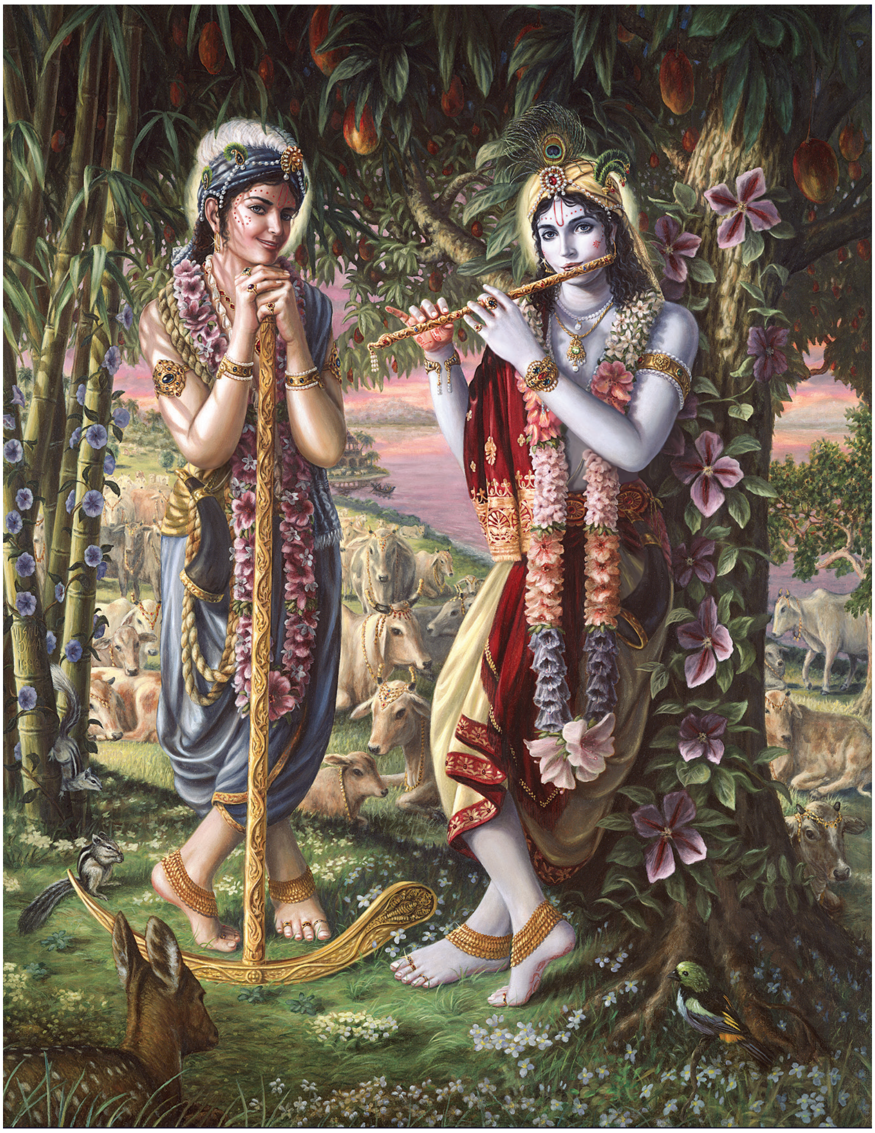
It took me about a year to get it to the printer, as I kept repainting over certain areas until I was satisfied. Nowadays I work slowly and carefully. I guess I'm no longer the "human camera."

How many prints of the "All-Attractive Couple" have you sold?

Last we checked it was over nine thousand. I'm just one artist, and this is my small contribution to honoring Śrīla Prabhupāda's request to flood the world with Kṛṣṇa art. With new temples springing up around the world, I can foresee lots of opportunities for artists to help Prabhupāda's mission to inundate the world with Kṛṣṇa art.

I noticed that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in "All-Attractive Couple" and Kṛṣṇa in your new painting "Sri Krishnachandra" [see cover] are looking directly at us, the observer, which you don't see too often in Kṛṣṇa art. Is there a purpose behind this?

Yes, the purpose is to inspire the desire for a personal relationship with Them. When studying the masters of portraiture, I noticed how they bring you into the subject's personal world through the eyes. I've had this same experience, as many have, by looking at the deities in temples. They are looking at us, inviting us into Their realm, into a personal relationship with Them. The greatest masters of portraiture have the ability to capture a person's image in 3D on a 2D canvas. In the case of a portrait of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, the same ideas are there, as They are the original inspiration of pure devotion and are forever inviting us into Their divine abode. Kṛṣṇa is Paramātmā and Bhagavān, the observer from within and without, so He is always seeing us and through us.



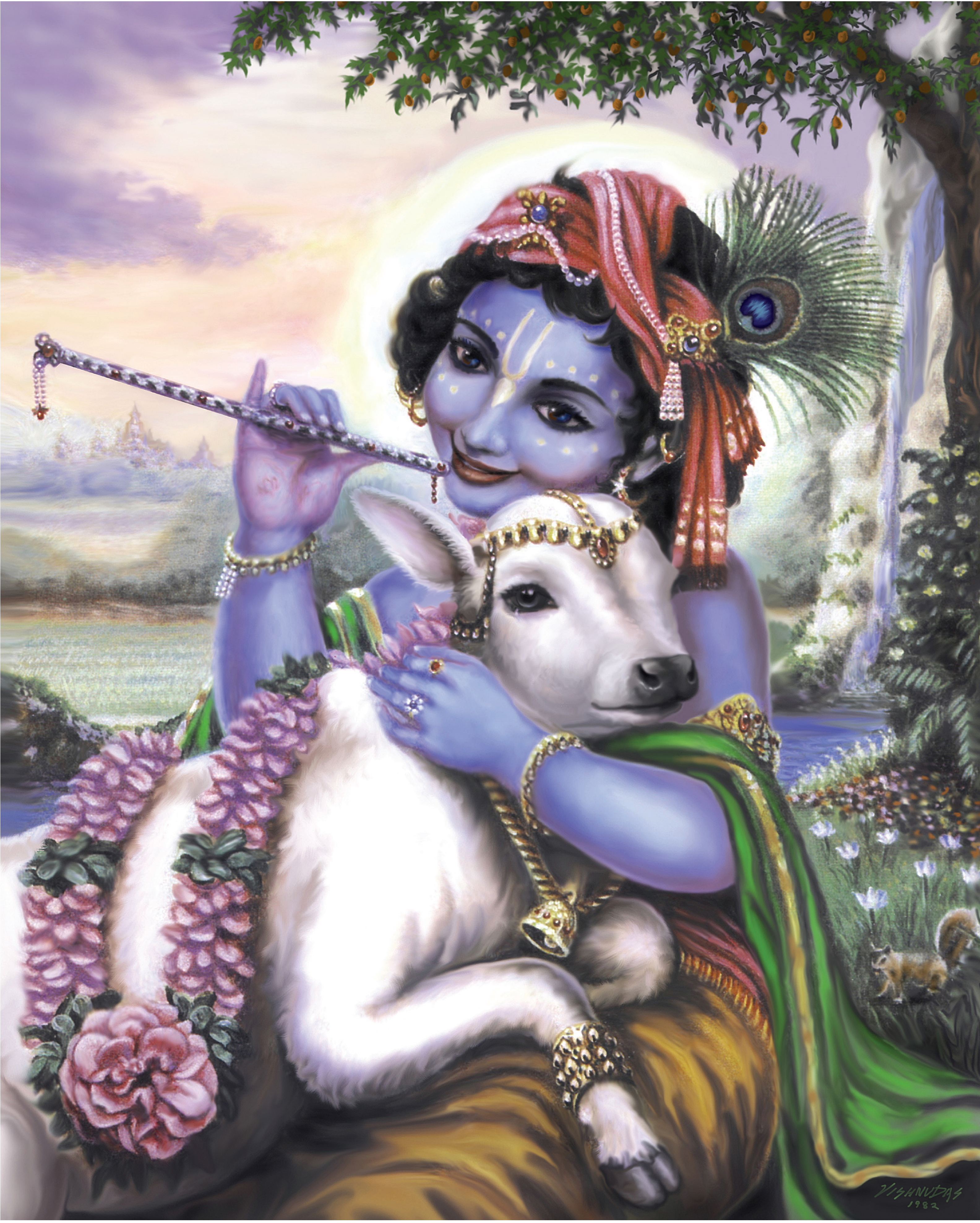
Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma

Is there a certain style of art that is best to illustrate Kṛṣṇa?

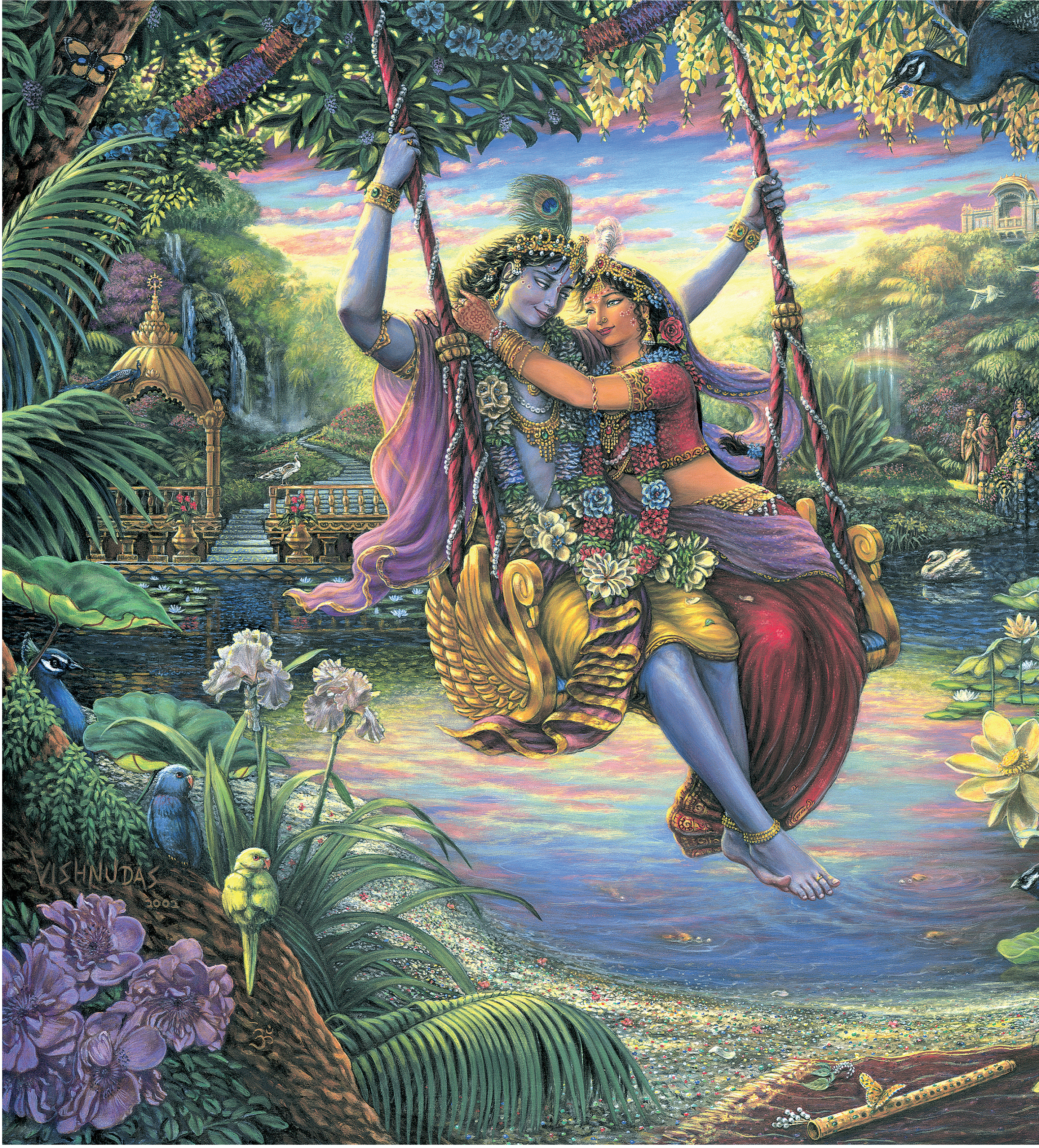
Kṛṣṇa deserves the very best that artists can provide with their skills, which need not be limited to one style or another. Only sincere devotion attracts Kṛṣṇa. And that is always the goal of a Kṛṣṇa artist—to please the spiritual master and the Lord with works of devotion.

Can you say something about your new painting, "Sri Krishnachandra"?

I became very interested in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's astrological birth chart and wanted to know more about His moon, as I have seen so many paintings with Śrī Kṛṣṇa shown with a full moon in the background. I found that at the time of His appearance in this world, Lord Kṛṣṇa's moon appeared full and in the *nakṣatra* of


VISHNUDAS
1982

Śrī Gopāla



Jhulan Līlā

Rohiṇī, exalted in Taurus, the sign of the bull. The bull is the symbol of dharma, the constitutional spiritual function of the soul.

Kṛṣṇa appeared just at the proper time to fulfill His mission to establish dharma, enliven His devotees, and do away with the tyrannical rulers and demons. Then I remembered that somewhere I had read that Kṛṣṇa's likeness is like that of the full moon. I thought I should paint Kṛṣṇa in this way. As I continued my research to find references for this painting, I found descriptions in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā,* Chapter 21, texts 125 through 132. There Lord Caitanya describes to Sanātana Gosvāmī the wonderful moonlike features of the Lord. This was the information I needed and was inspired by for this painting.

Here’s what it says there:

Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is identical with the Vedic hymn known as the Kāma-gāyatri, which is composed of twenty-four and a half syllables. Those syllables are compared to moons that arise in Kṛṣṇa. Thus all three worlds are filled with desire.

The face of Kṛṣṇa is the king of all moons, and the body of Kṛṣṇa is the throne. Thus the king governs a society of moons.

Kṛṣṇa has two cheeks that shine like glowing gems. Both are considered full moons. His forehead is considered a half moon, and the spot of sandalwood there is considered a full moon.

His fingernails are many full moons, and they dance on the flute in His hands. Their song is the melody of that flute. His toenails are also many full moons, and they dance on the ground. Their song is the jingling of His ankle bells.

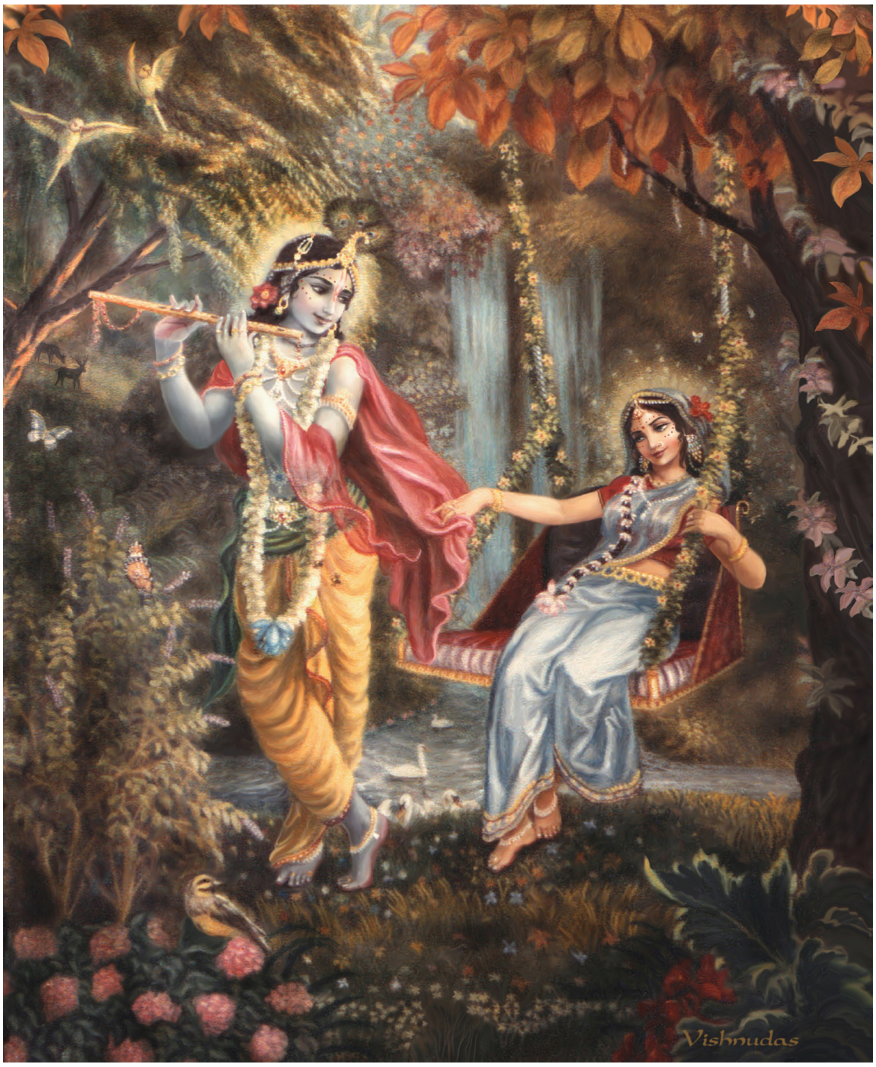
Kṛṣṇa’s face is the enjoyer king. That full-moon face makes His shark-shaped earrings and lotus eyes dance. His eyebrows are like bows, and His eyes are like arrows. His ears are fixed on the string of that bow, and when His eyes spread to His ears, He pierces the hearts of the *gopīs.*

The dancing features of His face surpass all other full moons and expand the marketplace of full moons. Although priceless, the nectar of Kṛṣṇa’s face is distributed to everyone. Some purchase the moonrays of His sweet smiles, and others purchase the nectar of His lips. Thus He pleases everyone.

Kṛṣṇa has two reddish, widely spread eyes. These are ministers of the king, and they subdue the pride of Cupid, who also has beautiful eyes. That face of Govinda, which is full of happiness, is the home of the pastimes of beauty, and it is very pleasing to everyone’s eyes.

If by devotional service one gets the results of pious activities and sees Lord Kṛṣṇa’s face, what can he relish with only two eyes?

Rādhā’s Swing



> His greed and thirst increase twofold by seeing the nectarean face of Kṛṣṇa. Due to his inability to sufficiently drink that nectar, he becomes very unhappy and criticizes the creator for not having given more than two eyes.

How long did it take to complete your painting "Sri Krishnachandra"?

It took me about two years of off-and-on work to complete. He did not appear quickly to me, but it took a lot of research, meditation, and patience.

The spiritual world is a timeless place, so if I can continue painting there when I leave this body, I won't need to worry how long a painting takes, will I?

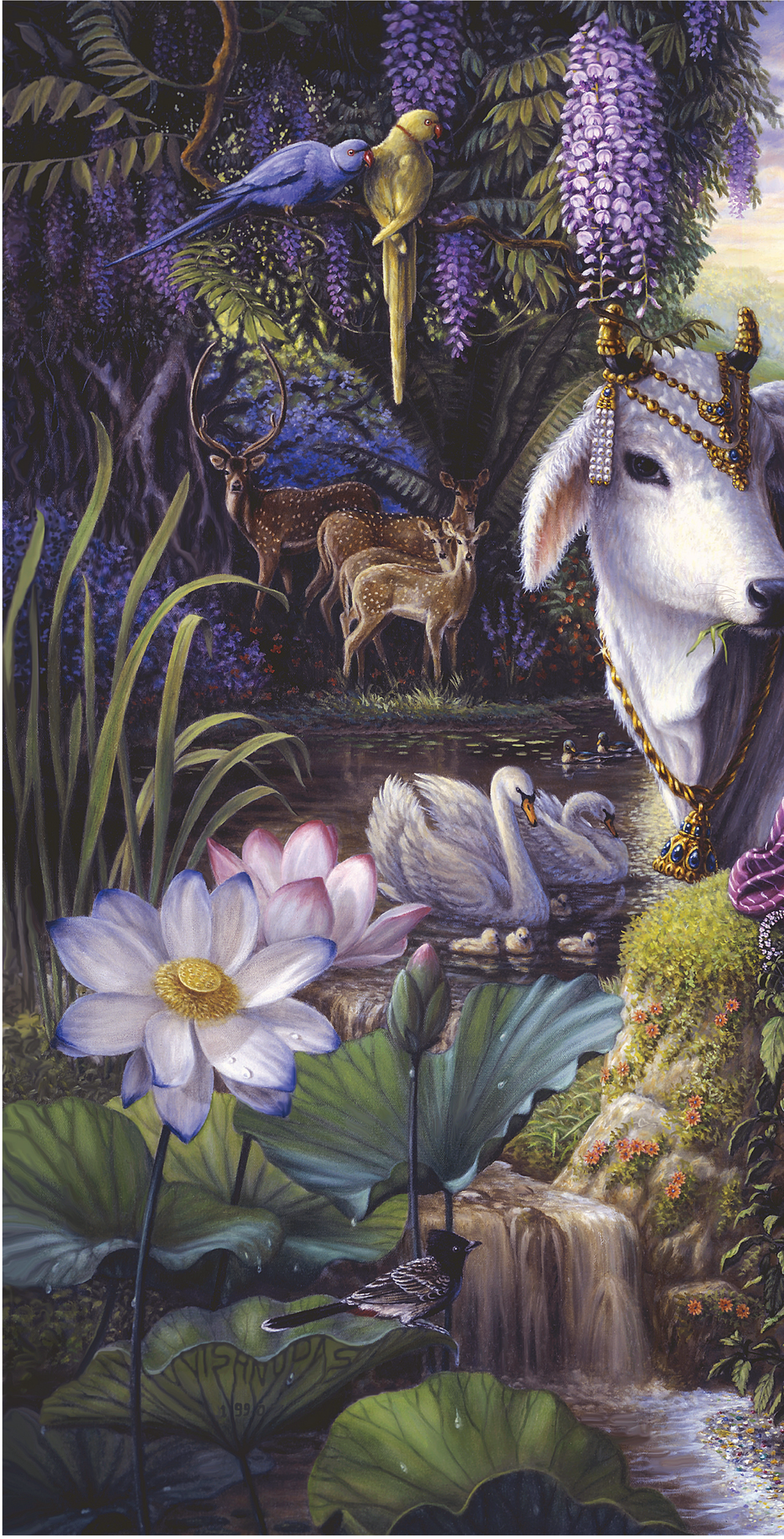
"Sri Krishnachandra" is such a beautiful painting, and He really does defeat the beauty of the moon. Do you feel this is your best work yet?

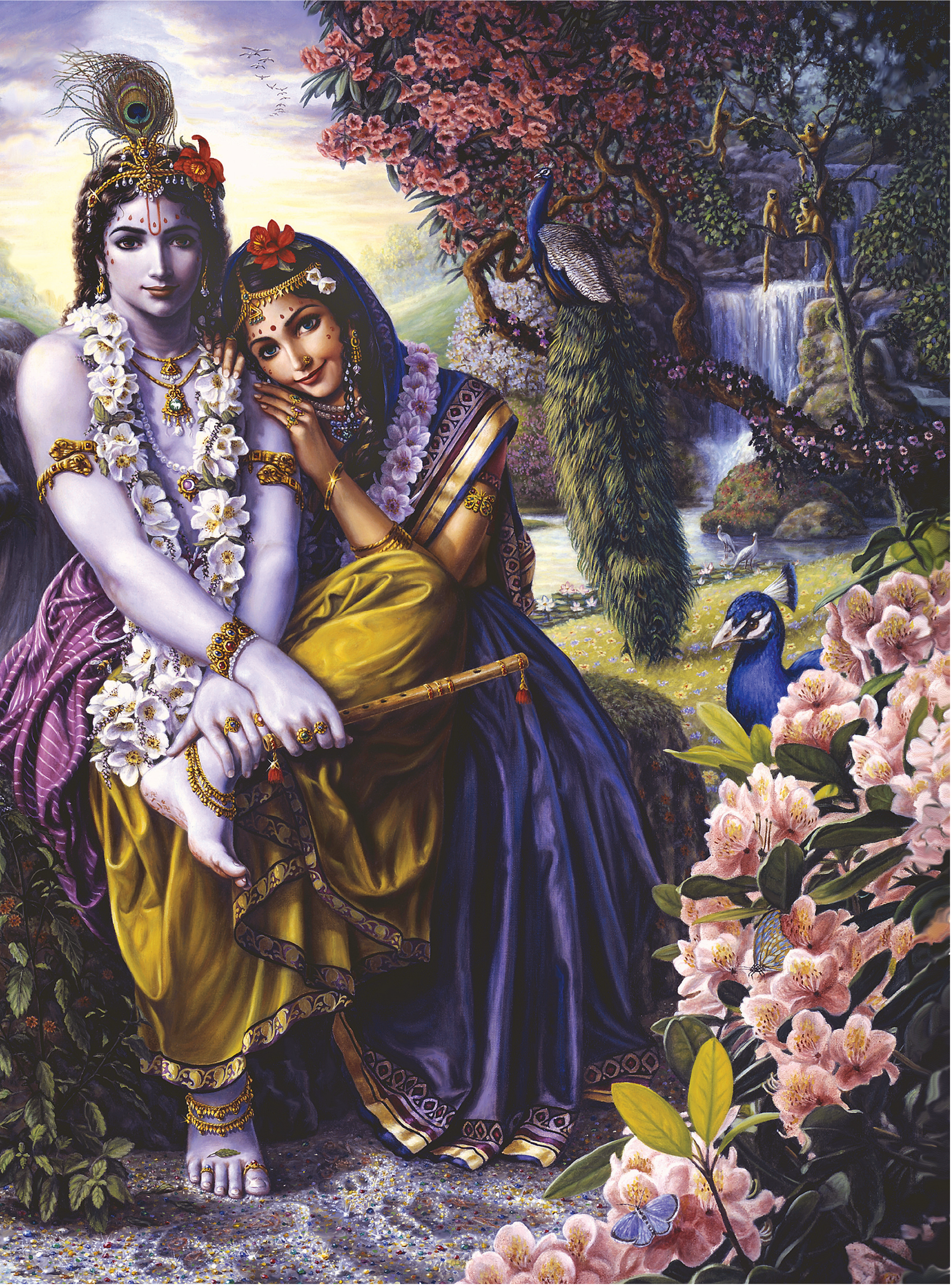
To me this painting is the culmination of all I have learned in fine art over the years, although I feel there is always room for improvement, especially when glorifying the Supreme Absolute Truth. We should always feel humble in our attempts to understand what Kṛṣṇa really looks like, but we can always remember what His pure devotee, Śrīla Prabhupāda, once said: "First understand that He is the most beautiful, the strongest, and He is always with His associates."

At one point I walked away from this painting and thought, "I will never finish it." I came back later that day and scrutinized it again. Then something inside me said, "It is done."

Others had told me months before that it was already finished. Only Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra knows for sure.

Viṣṇu Dāsa was initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda in Los Angeles in 1971. He now resides with his wife, Rudrāṇī Devī Dāsī, at Saranagati Village, British Columbia, Canada. His artwork can be seen at www.krishnaland.com. Svahadevi Soni works with Viṣṇu Dāsa on his website.





All-Attractive Couple

Religious Views Toward Women in the Public Sphere

By Guṇāvatāra Dāsa

FOR SOME TIME now I have been following a hot topic of public discourse in Israel—Hadarat Nashim, or the exclusion of women from the public sphere. Ultra-Orthodox Jews regard a man's sexual attraction to a woman as a threat, while many of the secular appear to welcome the attraction as a drug that gives them vitality.

Śrīla Prabhupāda often used the word *lust* when referring to sexual attraction. The more lust increases in a society, the Vedic literature tells us, the more its members will be attached to the body and its needs. Their selfishness will increase and gradually degrade them to the mode of ignorance, the root of many forms of injustice in modern society, including those in the religious sphere.

The fire of sexual passion may cause a person to cease to follow the path of religion and lose his or her faith in God. On account of this, it would seem that ultra-Orthodox considerations to exclude women from the public sphere have a rational basis. Women are an obstacle for ultra-Orthodox men who wish to calmly study religious teachings.

Women in Traditional Indian (Vedic) Culture

Śrīla Prabhupāda traveled to the West in the sixties to teach Westerners the principles of *bhakti*, devotional service to God, as a way to return to the original principles of religion, develop love for God, and transcend the miseries of material existence. He also wanted to establish a culture that supports the *bhakti* path.

In traditional Indian culture, a modest woman faithful to her husband and family is an invaluable asset, not only to her own family but also to society as a whole. This tradition respects women, but also guards them from excessive exposure in the public sphere so they don't attract the attention of men and distract their minds, intentionally or unintentionally. It also protects women from irresponsible men who might try to tempt them to give up their modesty and loyalty to their husbands and family and become objects to fulfill men's selfish, materialistic needs.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda left the traditional culture of India and traveled to the West, he saw that modern western society does not protect women as the Indian tradition does. He understood that in the modern situation, the solution is not the exclusion of women in the public sphere, but their inclusion while properly connected to spiritual culture and loyal to their husbands and families. That will make them satisfied within themselves and chaste and maternal toward men in general.

You Are Not the Body

Śrīla Prabhupāda knew that religion must connect one to pure love of God. Otherwise, no religion can withstand the current of modern life and its products, including insatiable lust, neediness, and addictions. These reduce the human spirit, making it more and more materialistic.

The practice of *bhakti-yoga* begins with understanding the difference between oneself and one's body and bodily designations based on race, sex, nationality, and so on. "You are not the body" is its starting point.

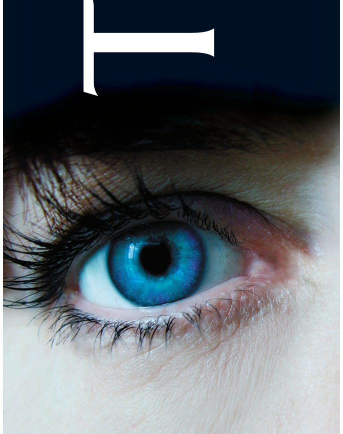
Anyone who correctly pursues the spiritual path and develops love for God gradually ceases to evaluate people based on their external body. A man will not see women as women but as souls, and a woman will not see men as men but as souls. In this way they decrease the tension between the sexes and its implications for society.

Without this release from bodily designations, religion is nothing but disguised materialism, which cannot truly liberate one from the shackles of lust. People under material illusion identify with the body and define themselves and others in that way—as Jews or Muslims, male or female, and so on—and are attracted or averse to others according to their material body. They cannot see the spiritual essence in everyone and every soul's connection to God, a connection that transcends material designations and identifications.

Without seeing others as spiritual beings, it is not possible to curb lust. In a culture that denies the symptoms of lust, a person not free from identifying with an external designation will reveal his or her lust in a different way. He or she will be like someone who gives up smoking but does not treat the need for smoking and begins eating obsessively.

Lust and Loathing

The attempt of the ultra-Orthodox to protect themselves from lust by keeping a safe distance between men and women is not wrong, and should even be appreciated, as long as it does not become radical. I believe that what caused the public protest in Israel was not the exclusion of women per se, but the disgust and the verbal and physical violence that some ultra-Orthodox men have expressed towards women.



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According to the news, ultra-Orthodox men in the city of Beit Shemesh spit on an eight-year-old girl, insulted her, and called her a prostitute because her modest dress did not adhere exactly to their more rigorous dress code.

Extreme behavior such as violence towards the different, loathing of women, hatred for others, intolerance, and so on, are symptoms of something unresolved in one's personality. The public expects a religious practitioner who seriously and properly follows the religious path to develop the qualities of a saintly person, a *sādhu*: "The symptoms of a *sādhu* are that he is tolerant, merciful, and friendly to all living entities. He has no enemies, he is peaceful, he abides by the scriptures, and all his characteristics are sublime. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.25.21)

A spiritually developed person does not despise others, but knows how to forgive, feel compassion, and provide spiritual inspiration. Such conduct from religious practitioners towards immodesty in the public sphere would certainly receive much appreciation among the more enlightened secular sector, and would uplift the entire public.

The Remedy for Lust

The ultimate solution to the problem of lust is a real connection with God. Only by devoting oneself to the satisfaction of the Lord can one be completely satisfied in oneself. This is a basic principle of *bhakti-yoga*. In such consciousness, we become free from a possessive mentality in which we want to use others for our selfish needs.

One who practices *bhakti-yoga* does not wish to enjoy or control others to satisfy his or her ego, but, as a loving servant of God, treats everyone—women or men, Jew or Arab, animal or plant—as creations of God and understands that satisfying God includes helping everyone come closer to God. Only in such consciousness can one eventually overcome the material false ego, the source and cause of lust. Collectively, this consciousness creates a healthier society, free from sexual obsessions.

A practitioner following the path of *bhakti-yoga* does not consider himself or herself free from lust, but is aware of the possibility of temporary weakness on the path to perfection, the path to complete freedom from lust. That's why, outside of their service to God, men will be careful not to associate closely with women and women will be careful not to associate closely with men. Only by service to God is the practitioner of *bhakti-yoga* protected by God from lust, the number one enemy of spiritual life.

God's Creation Is Perfect

Nothing in creation is essentially negative, nor should it be loathed. Everything comes from God and is therefore essentially positive. If treated properly, anything can produce great benefits.

Immodesty is not a reason for loathing, but for proper conduct. For a person sincerely striving to attain God, meeting with immodesty can serve as an indication of one's heart and an encouragement for deeper spiritual practice and compassion for the immodest.

Sexual desire is within the heart; for a man, a woman is but an external indication of it. A man obsessed with lust might find even a female doll or silhouette provocative.

Unless one addresses the roots of lust in the heart, one's religious or spiritual practice will be ineffective. Instead of pointing a blaming finger at women (or at seculars, or at non-Jews), maybe it's time to raise questions about the nature of a religious practice that creates a public so given to lust, disgust, hatred, racism, and intolerance.

A society endowed with true wisdom knows how to employ women's tremendous energy not only to bear children, but also, in full spiritual equality with men, to spiritually elevate the world while simultaneously safeguarding men from melting in the fire of lust.

Guṇāvatara Dāsa, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, has been publishing books and teaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Israel since the late 1970s. He is married to Vārṣabhānavī Devī Dāsī and contributes articles in Hebrew to www.yogaoflove.org.

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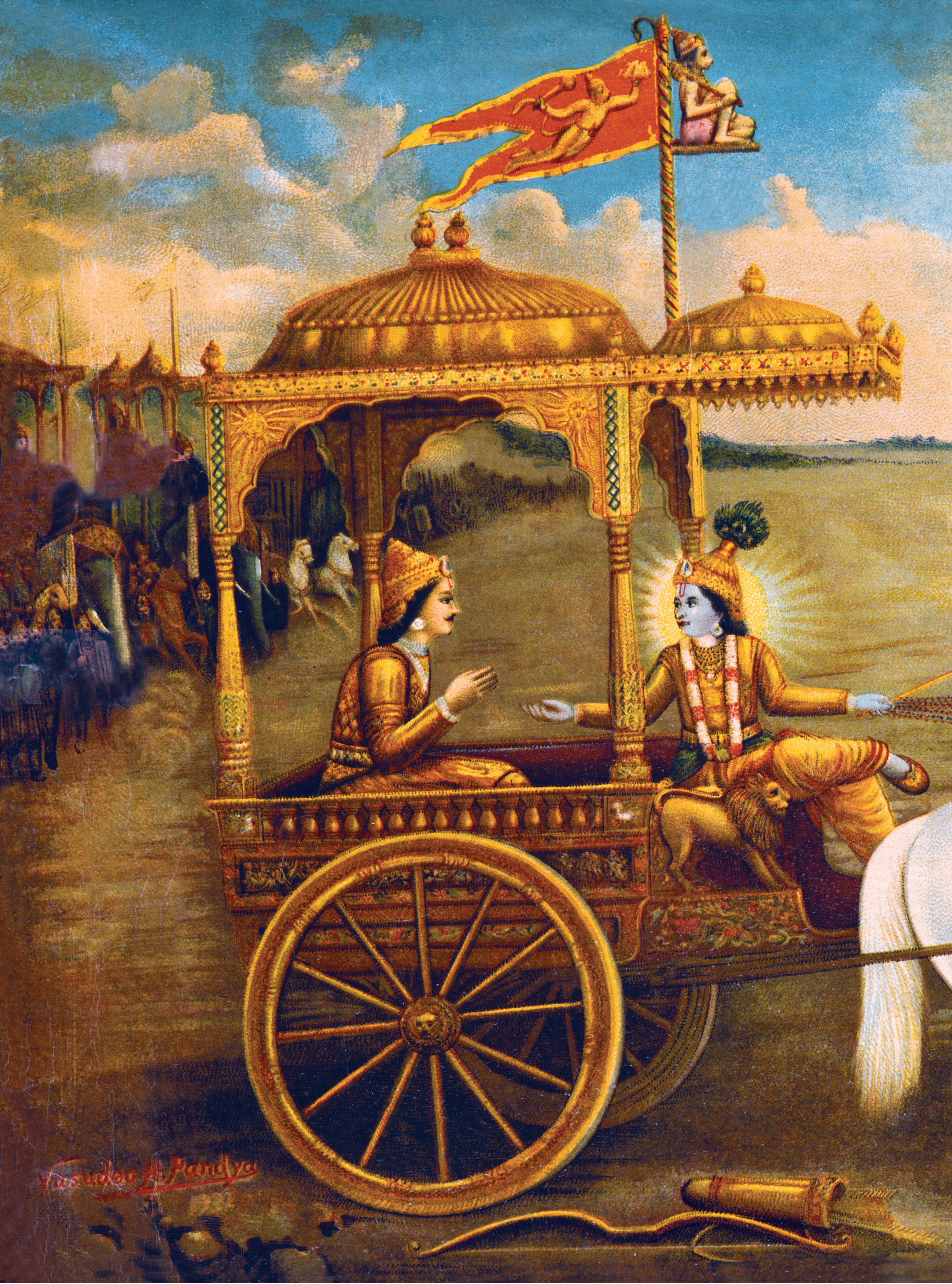
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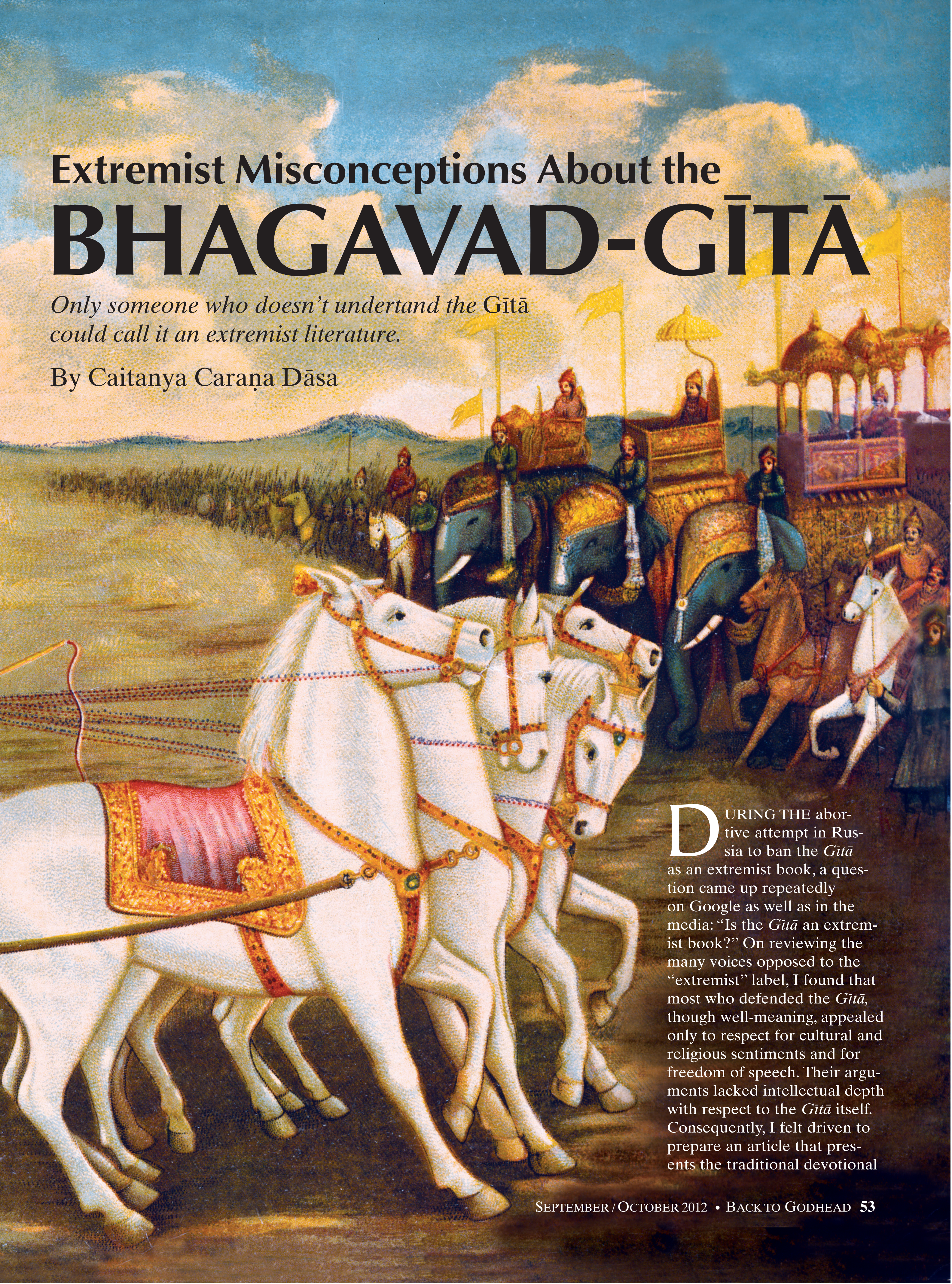


Extremist Misconceptions About the BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ

Only someone who doesn't undertand the Gītā *could call it an extremist literature.*

By Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa

DURING THE abortive attempt in Russia to ban the *Gītā* as an extremist book, a question came up repeatedly on Google as well as in the media: "Is the *Gītā* an extremist book?" On reviewing the many voices opposed to the "extremist" label, I found that most who defended the *Gītā,* though well-meaning, appealed only to respect for cultural and religious sentiments and for freedom of speech. Their arguments lacked intellectual depth with respect to the *Gītā* itself. Consequently, I felt driven to prepare an article that presents the traditional devotional understanding of the *Gītā* with sensitivity to contemporary intellectual concerns. Such an article, I felt, would not only address the current accusations that the *Gītā* is extremist, but also serve a more enduring and universal purpose of offering a glimpse into the profundity of its wisdom. So here we go.

A Message of Love

The *Bhagavad-gītā,* far from being an extremist book, is a book of wisdom and a message of love. It reveals God's love for humanity; only our extreme disorientation from divine love makes us imagine that the *Gītā* is an extremist literature.

Let us first understand the *Gītā's* essential message of love and then analyze some of its aspects that may seem to belie this message and may, if taken totally out of context and wildly misinterpreted, be seen as extremist.

Kṛṣṇa starts His message of love by enlightening Arjuna: We are all souls, spiritual beings (2.13), entitled to rejoice in eternal love with the supremely lovable and loving God, Kṛṣṇa. All of us long for lasting love, but we seek it on the inherently fleeting material platform. The *Gītā's* philosophical wisdom of our eternal spiritual identity creates a lasting foundation on which we can build an edifice of love that the storms of time will never bring crumbling down.

In the *Gītā* Kṛṣṇa offers a concise overview of the various paths for spiritual progress: *karma-yoga* (the path of detached action), *jñāna-yoga* (the path of analysis), *dhyāna-yoga* (the path of meditation), and *bhakti-yoga* (the path of love). Simultaneously, throughout the *Gītā* He hints, indicates, states, asserts, and proclaims that the path of love is the best (2.61, 3.30, 4.3, 5.29, 6.30, 7.1, 8.14, 8.22, 9.26–27, 10.9–12, 11.53–54, 12.6–7, 13.18, 14.26, 15.19, 17.26–27, 18.64–66). As the *Gītā* progresses, the hints become more and more explicit; the secret becomes increasingly revealed, until the *Gītā's* emotional climax at its end (18.64–66), where Kṛṣṇa bares His heart in a disarming proclamation of love and an endearing call for love.

Scripture as Metaphor

EMINENT SPIRITUAL teachers like Śrīpāda Madhvācārya, Śrī Vedānta Deśika, and Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura used metaphorical interpretation of scripture—known as *gauṇa vṛtti* (secondary meaning), as contrasted with *mukhya vṛtti* (primary meaning)—when a look at the implied symbolism can supply additional meaning that can supplement (but not supplant) the direct meaning. Śrīla Prabhupāda rejected time and again the metaphorical interpretation of the Kurukshetra war when it was used as a substitute for the literal interpretation, as a means to deny the historicity of the *Mahābhārata* war, as a tool to explain away into nonoccurrence the violence that occurred there. Nonetheless, he used the metaphorical interpretation occasionally, as in his talk while giving initiations for the first time in America in 1966 at New York, as quoted in *The Hare Krishna Explosion,* by Hayagrīva Dāsa. "We are also in a kind of chariot with Kṛṣṇa. That chariot is this material body, and within the heart Lord Kṛṣṇa is present as the Supersoul, witnessing all our activities." Paraphrasing Śrīla Prabhupāda, the author further writes, "He then reminds us that we should never fret when confronted with adversities, for we should always know that Lord Kṛṣṇa is driving our chariot."

Thus, the *Gītā* is essentially a revelation of God's love for humanity as well as a love call for humanity's reciprocal love for God.

Potential Misunderstandings

Let us now look at three aspects of the *Gītā* that are at times misunderstood: its battlefield setting, its vision of God as destroyer, and its blunt value judgments.

1. The Battlefield Setting of the *Bhagavad-gītā*

Because of its battlefied setting, the *Bhagavad-gītā* is sometimes misunderstood as calling for violence. However, the *Gītā* uses that setting to demonstrate that its call for transcendence is practical, responsible, and dynamic. Let's see how the setting serves these three purposes:

A. The practicality of spirituality: Many people feel that spirituality is too other-worldly and so is impractical or irrelevant given the urgent practical demands of this world. To address their concern, the *Bhagavad-gītā* delivers its spiritual message in an eminently this-worldly setting that calls for the most urgent practical action: a battlefield. By showing how its spiritual wisdom solaced and empowered Arjuna, a responsible prince who had broken down on the battlefield, the *Gītā* illustrates poignantly the universal applicability of its teachings. If someone on a battlefield could spare time to gain the *Gītā's* spiritual wisdom and found it relevant, practical, and empowering, then no one needs to doubt the practicality of the *Gītā's* message and no circumstance needs to warrant relegating the *Gītā's* message to the "to be done later" category.

B. The social responsibility of spiritualists: While the *Bhagavad-gītā* offers a message that can guide anyone in any circumstance to transcendence, peace, and fulfillment, it also recognizes that people can benefit from its message only when the prevailing sociopolitical order fosters moral and spiritual integrity. When the heads of state are morally and spiritually depraved, as they were before the Kurushetra war, assertive action is essential to prevent people from being exploited, abused, and ruined. The *Mahābhārata* sections preceding the narration of the *Gītā* describe vividly:

- The multiple injustices and atrocities committed by the heads of state, the Kauravas.
- The repeated efforts of the victims, the Pāṇḍavas, to peacefully restore justice and morality.
- The utter disdain with which the Kauravas rejected all the attempts for peace, thus making a peaceful solution impossible.

For victims of massive injustice, the *Gītā* doesn't condone a passive spectator role that reduces noble pacifism to impotent and suicidal utopianism. Instead, the *Gītā* advocates pragmatic assertive action for protecting basic human rights. That violence should be the last expression of such assertiveness—and never anything other than the last—is illustrated by the exhaustive peace efforts that preceded it. The very fact that several globally acclaimed champions of nonviolence, including Mahatma Gandhi, found inspiration in the message of the *Gītā* demonstrates that violence is not its core message. Of course, those who find the battlefield setting discomforting have tried to explain it (away) in metaphorical terms, but such an explanation undoes the intrinsic pragmatism that makes the *Gītā's* message of transcendence so appealing. By delivering this message on a battlefield, the *Gītā* illustrates that even those who consider life's ultimate goals to be otherworldly have a this-worldly responsibility to contribute to establishing and protecting the moral and spiritual fabric of society.

C. The inner dynamics of spirituality: The metaphorical interpretation of the *Gītā's* setting is not wrong, but it best harmonizes with the overall spirit of the *Gītā* when seen as a supplement to—and not a substitute for—its historical context. In addition to the battle's historicity, the battlefield setting, then, represents our internal consciousness, which features the battle between godly desires and ungodly desires. Each of us needs to win this inner battle if we are to play our part in establishing moral and spiritual integrity in society and not let our ungodly attachments to selfish interests sabotage our godly aspirations for personal integrity. Even when our ungodly attachments outnumber our godly aspirations, as was the case with the godly Pāṇḍavas fighting the ungodly Kauravas, the *Gītā's* setting conveys the morale-boosting reassurance that when we harmonize our godly desires with God's will, His supreme power will empower us to attain inner victory and self-mastery.

To summarize, the *Gītā's* battlefield setting, when seen in its historical and philosophical context, reveals the *Gītā* itself to be a call not for blanket violence, but for complete spiritual activism.

The *Gītā's* battlefield setting reveals the *Gītā* itself to be a call not for blanket violence, but for complete spiritual activism.

2. The Vision of God as Destroyer

The eleventh chapter of the *Gītā* describes the universal form of God emiting blazing flames of destruction and devouring all directions. Though such a conception of God may seem brutal and ghastly, it underpins a subtle but essential truth: The destruction and death that inevitably characterize the world are not outside God's jurisdiction. God is not primarily the destroyer, but the restorer; when the temporary stands in the way of the eternal, as it does for all of us infatuated with the temporary and neglectful of the eternal, God destroys the temporary to make way for the eternal. Moreover, a careful reading of the full eleventh chapter reveals its essential import. Arjuna asks to see the universal form of God, becomes terrified on seeing the destruction therein, and immediately changes his mind, asking to be shown the beautiful two-handed form of Kṛṣṇa once again. Just as the destructiveness of the universal form serves to redirect Arjuna to the beauty of Kṛṣṇa, similarly the destruction and death that beset the world, the *Gītā* teaches us, can serve to redirect our heart to the eternality and beauty of Kṛṣṇa.

3. Blunt Value Judgments

Some of us may be disturbed when we encounter in the *Gītā* words that indicate strong value judgments: "fool" (*mūḍha,* 7.25), "lowest among human beings" (*narādhama,* 16.17), and so forth. To gain a proper understanding of why they are used, we need to contextualize them philosophically.

Value judgments emerge from values, which in turn grow out of a philosophy. If we go beyond the value judgments to the values and the philosophy, we will often find that the philosophy has a sense of its own. And once we understand the philosophy, we will find that its resulting values are not so different from our own. Then, with this intellectual framework in place, the value judgments will become at least intelligible, if not acceptable. In other words, we need to judge the values before we judge the value judgments.

Let's therefore look beyond the value judgments to the values and the philosophy of the *Bhagavad-gītā.*

The *Gītā* (14.4) advocates a remarkably ecumenical worldview in which God accepts as His own children all living beings—not just humans, but even animals and plants. Only recently and nascently has our political correctness started waking us up to animal rights. But thousands of years ago the *Gītā* confered upon all subhuman beings (or the more politically correct "nonhuman beings") the spiritual right of integral and eternal membership in the family of God.

Further, the *Gītā* (4.7–9) describes that God so loves all His children that He descends to this world—not just once, but periodically again and again and yet again.

Moreover, the *Gītā* (9.32–33) by its universal and accessible gospel of devotion opens the doors of redemption for one and all, irrespective of caste, gender, or other such worldly designations.

Many eminent thinkers have appreciated this universality and accessibility of the *Gītā's* message. Here, for example, is a quote from Aldous Huxley: "The Bhagavad-Gita is the most systematic statement of spiritual evolution of endowing value to mankind. . . . Its enduring value is subject not only to India but to all of humanity."

We may wonder: If the *Gītā* advocates such lofty values, then why does it hand out blunt value judgments?

The *Bhagavad-gītā* presents an open-minded worldview that integrates all people, no matter how diverse their values, goals, and paths. According to their level of spiritual evolution, the *Gītā* assigns them an appropriate position on a universal continuum that extends downwards to total spiritual ignorance and upwards to complete spiritual realization. The *Gītā* also offers them versions of spirituality customized to their levels so as to inspire them and help them rise higher on the spiritual continuum.

The *Gītā* is broad-minded, but not empty-minded; it does not imagine vacuously that all levels on the spiritual continuum are the same. That's why the *Gītā* (16.7–20) disapproves unequivocally mindsets and lifestyles that violate one's spiritual integrity and propel one downwards on the spiritual continuum.

The *Gītā* considers godlessness not an intrinsic quality of the soul, but an extrinsic infection acquired by unwholesome contact. According to the *Gītā,* godlessness is a sickness for the soul, a sickness easily and thoroughly curable by the therapy of devotional service. The *Gītā* doesn't equate a mortally sick person with a vibrantly healthy person, for that would condemn the sick person to perpetual sickness and distort laudable open-mindedness into deplorable empty-mindedness.

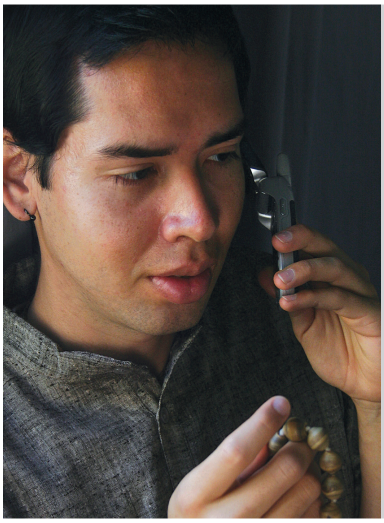
The *Gītā's* value judgments are like the exasperated outbursts of a caring doctor dealing with a suffering patient who stubbornly refuses to take the treatment. Seen in this light, the *Gītā's* value judgments are expressions not of condemnation, but of compassion. The *Gītā* uses strong judgmental words like *fools.* Śrīla Prabhupāda, as the preeminent modern-day *Gītā* exponent, was known to use the word *rascal* quite often, but his use follows in the compassionate—not condemnatory—spirit of Lord Kṛṣṇa, as is evident from the following quote: "The only concern of the devotees is that so many rascals are suffering in the concocted civilization of illusory sense enjoyment, how can they be saved? So our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is made for that saving the rascals." (Letter to a disciple)

Fathoming by Tuning

The Austrian philosopher Rudolph Steiner wrote, "In order to approach a creation as sublime as the Bhagavad Gita with full understanding it is necessary to attune our soul to it." We can best attune our soul to the *Gītā* by understanding it from those who have tuned their soul to it and are living its essential message. A prime example of a *Gītā* teacher who was first and foremost a *Gītā* liver and a *Gītā* lover was Śrīla Prabhupāda. His *Gītā* translation and commentary, *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, is not only the most widely distributed and read English edition of the *Gītā,* but is also the one that has brought about the most transformation in its readers. By understanding the *Gītā* from *Gītā* lovers like Śrīla Prabhupāda, we can not only dispel "extremist" misunderstandings about the *Gītā,* but, more important, can also acquire essential understanding of the *Gītā.*

While it is important to defend the *Gītā* so as to prevent it from being banned officially in any part of the world, it is equally, if not more, important to understand the *Gītā* so that we don't ban it unofficially in our own lives by mistaking it to be incomprehensible or irrelevant.

Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa is a disciple of His Holiness Rādhānātha Swami. He holds a degree in electronic and telecommunications engineering and serves full time at ISKCON Pune. He is the author of eight books. To read his other articles or to receive his daily reflection on the Bhagavad-gītā, *"Gita-daily," visit thespiritualscientist.com.*



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EQUAL VISION

(*continued from page 26*)

describing these different natures, Lord Kṛṣṇa also states:

> *vidyā-vinaya-sampanne*
> *brāhmaṇe gavi hastini*
> *śuni caiva śva-pāke ca*
> *paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ*

"The humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle *brāhmaṇa,* a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste]." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 5.18)

On what basis then is this equal vision established? How is an elephant equal to a dog, or a learned man equal to a cow? Shall we all sit down with the animals to eat and share our beds? An elephant cannot sit down to recite the *Vedas,* nor can a man eat a hundred pounds of hay a day. A woman can never be identical to a man, an intellectual cannot be forced into manual labor—equality cannot be achieved on the external level. Everyone must act according to his or her acquired nature.

Kṛṣṇa accepts the service of every one of us, regardless of our different natures. He looks only to see the *bhakti,* or love.

The Solution in a Higher Understanding

The solution to this dilemma lies in understanding the higher nature of the living beings. A true sage sees equally because he looks beyond the body. The first step is knowing that the living being is not the body but the eternal soul within it. The current body of a living being is not his true nature. In a short spell of time it will be abandoned and changed. But the soul himself does not change:

> *na jāyate mriyate vā kadācin*
> *nāyaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na*
> *bhūyaḥ*
> *ajo nityaḥ śāśvato 'yaṁ purāṇo*
> *na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*

"For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 2.20)

The vision of the sage is spiritual. He sees the oneness of all living beings in their common eternal spiritual nature while simultaneously recognizing their varied temporally acquired natures.

All souls are eternally parts of the Supreme Soul, Lord Kṛṣṇa, who claims all living beings to be His offspring:

> *sarva-yoniṣu kaunteya*
> *mūrtayaḥ sambhavanti yāḥ*
> *tāsāṁ brahma mahad yonir*
> *ahaṁ bīja-pradaḥ pitā*

"It should be understood that all species of life, O son of Kuntī, are made possible by birth in this material nature, and that I am the seed-giving father." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 14.4)

The frustrations of life are experienced due to forgetfulness of our common eternal connection with the Supreme Person, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. When the parts of the tree—the leaves and branches—become separated from the root, they dry up. Similarly when the soul forgets his eternal relationship with the Supreme, he comes to this world of matter and tries to be happy separately from his source. His search for happiness results in a great struggle for existence, each soul trying to lord over the others in a futile bid to be controllers and enjoyers:

> *mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke*
> *jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ*
> *manaḥ-ṣaṣṭhānīndriyāṇi*
> *prakṛti-sthāni karṣati*

"The living entities in this conditioned world are My eternal fragmental parts. Due to conditioned life, they are struggling very hard with the six senses, which include the mind." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 15.7)

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu taught that each soul is meant for service to the Supreme and that the true identity of each individual is as an eternal servant of God:

> *jīvera 'svarūpa' haya kṛṣṇera*
> *'nitya-dāsa'*

"The living entity is an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme God." (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 20.108)

True happiness must be eternal. It is found in harmonious coexistence in common service to the Supreme Lord. Kṛṣṇa accepts the service of every one of us, regardless of our different natures. He looks only to see the *bhakti,* or love with which we serve Him, regardless of whether we are man or woman, rich or poor, clever or simple, merchant or intellectual, black or white, Hindu, Muslim, Jew, or Christian, Indian, American, British, adult or child. Anyone can take part in the sublime process of *bhakti-yoga* —linking with the Lord through loving devotion.

Therefore Lord Caitanya, who is understood to be the same Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa come again as His own devotee, established His sublime doctrine of *acintya bheda-* and *abheda-tattva*—simultaneous oneness and difference. Anyone, from whatever diverse material situation one has acquired, can approach the Lord with love and affection and be accepted by Him into His eternal *līlā* of *prema,* His pastimes of pure love.

The Lord promulgated an easy and effective method for achieving this. Simply by the process of glorifying the Supreme by chanting His holy names—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, or any bona fide name of God—anyone can attain the highest state of ecstatic love and live in harmony with all living beings, seeing them as brothers and sisters under our common father, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

"The proof of the pudding is in the eating" is a famous saying. In the modern age my Guru Mahārāja, His Divine Grace Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, as the humble servant of the great *ācārya* Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja Prabhupāda, has carried this universal doctrine to every corner of the globe, transcending all barriers of race, caste, creed, and social diversity to create an international movement of universal love and peace. Because of his ability to see every living being spiritually, he knew the true potential of millions of bewildered souls. He has demonstrated the power of the true sage and has enjoined all of us to share that vision and thus make our lives perfect.

If the present leaders of society want true equality and its consequent product of common happiness and respect among all living beings, they can do no better than to seek the advice of the true sages whose equal vision can factually unite all living beings in common purpose.

We are very glad to have the opportunity to share our thoughts and realizations with our brothers and sisters from the Gaudiya Mission, and we look forward to a future of cooperation and mutual endeavor for the glory of Śrī Śrī Guru and Gaurāṅga and the benefit of the world.

Hari Śauri Dāsa, who served as Śrīla Prabhupāda's personal secretary, lives at ISKCON Mayapur and is the director of the Bhaktivedanta Research Centre.

THE ORIGINAL SEED

(*continued from page 10*)

preach will be glorified. Your country will be glorified. The message of *Bhagavad-gītā* is a fact; it is not a story.

People are fed up with this wrong type of civilization. It is not civilization. We have been warned in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (5.5.4):

nūnaṁ pramattaḥ kurute vikarma
yad indriya-prītaya āpṛṇoti
na sādhu manye yata ātmano 'yam
asann api kleśada āsa dehaḥ

"When a person considers sense gratification the aim of life, he certainly becomes mad after materialistic living and engages in all kinds of sinful activity. He does not know that due to his past misdeeds he has already received a body which, although temporary, is the cause of his misery. Actually the living entity should not have taken on a material body, but he has been awarded the material body for sense gratification. Therefore I think it not befitting an intelligent man to involve himself again in the activities of sense gratification by which he perpetually gets material bodies one after another."

According to Vedic principles, at least the *brāhmaṇas* and leaders should avoid four kinds of sinful activity: meat-eating, illicit sex, gambling, and intoxication. But practically everyone is addicted to these sinful activities. Therefore they are mad, *pramattaḥ.* These are forbidden in the *śāstra,* and people are doing them. Why? Because they are mad. Why are they so mad? *Yad indriya-prītaya āpṛṇoti:* "Simply for sense gratification." That's all. Not for anything big but to satisfy the senses.

"Oh, oh, my tongue is asking for a cigarette, asking for wine. All right, give the tongue wine."

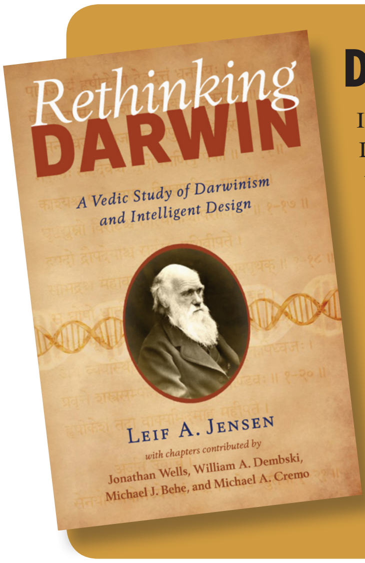
Why? Without a cigarette, without wine, shall you die?

"I want to satisfy my tongue."

Why are meat-eating, illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling considered sinful? Because they force the *ātmā,* or soul, to accept another body, which is the source of misery. People have lost their brain. They do not know what is actual unhappiness; they do not know what a miserable condition they are in. They are like animals that do not know what is going on when they enter the slaughterhouse: "All right, let me go." That's all.

This kind of civilization will not make you happy. You have been born in the *puṇya-bhūmi,* in the sacred land of Bhārata-varṣa. Here is your knowledge. Take it and be successful in your life.

Thank you very much.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Port Royal, Pennsylvania (Gita Nagari) — 534 Gita Nagari Rd., 17082/ Tel. (717) 527-4101/ dhruva.bts@pamho.net

Sandy Ridge, North Carolina (Prabhupada Village) — 1283 Prabhupada Rd., 27046/ Tel. (336) 593-9888/ madanmohanmohini@yahoo.com

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Who's Scared?

I DON'T MUCH like nighttime. Watching the sun set recently, I thought how horrible it would be to fear darkness, powerless as we are to prevent the arrival of night. Some people suffer from this fear, called achluophobia. It's one of more than five hundred phobias listed on one psychology website, including fear of flutes (aulophobia), fear of flowers (anthophobia), fear of chins (geniophobia). It's hard not to smile at some of these, but for people who suffer from them, they're no joke.

Phobias are abnormal fears, but the *Hitopadeśa* tells us that of the four activities human beings and animals share in common—eating, sleeping, mating, and fearing—fear is always present. The birds feeding outside my kitchen window suggest this, always ready to take flight at the slightest danger, real or imagined. I present no danger to these birds or to the deer that sometimes pass near our house, but they don't know this. They're constantly ready to bolt. While fear may show differently in animals than in humans (human anxiety, for example), it's always present within us nonetheless.

Fear can even infect our spiritual aspirations, as Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions in his purport to *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.10): "In the materialistic concept, the body is perishable, full of ignorance, and completely miserable. . . . [For persons] too materially absorbed, the conception of retaining the personality after liberation from matter frightens them. When they are informed that spiritual life is also individual and personal, they become afraid of becoming persons again, and so they naturally prefer a kind of merging into the impersonal void. . . . This is a kind of fearful stage of life, devoid of perfect knowledge of spiritual existence."

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.2.37) reveals the source of the living being's fear: "Fear arises when a living entity misidentifies himself as the material body because of absorption in the external, illusory energy of the Lord. When the living entity thus turns away from the Supreme Lord, he also forgets his own constitutional position as a servant of the Lord. This bewildering, fearful condition is effected by the potency for illusion, called *māyā.*"

We fear because we've forgotten who we are.

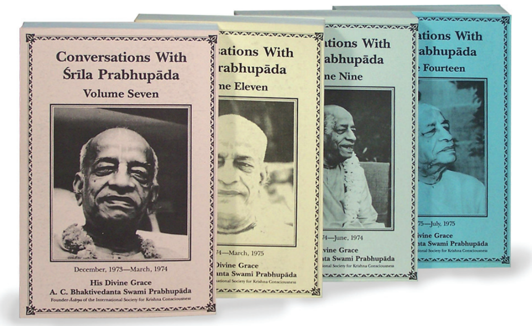
We're now in a kind of sleep, the sources of our fear being as unreal as the torments of our nightmares. Fear has no place in our pure state, the essence of which is awareness of our eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa. The remedy for fear, therefore, is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness does not mean only thinking of Kṛṣṇa; it includes thinking of ourselves as Kṛṣṇa's servants. And a devotee thinks, "Kṛṣṇa is God, the controller of everything, and I'm His servant. So why should I fear anything? Kṛṣṇa will surely protect His servant."

Because that conviction derives from loving Kṛṣṇa, it deepens with the resolute practice of *bhakti-yoga*. The pure devotee sees Kṛṣṇa in everything. And as Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.30), "For one who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, I am never lost, nor is he ever lost to Me."

Surprisingly, I didn't find "fear of getting lost" on the list of phobias. There are also what we might call healthy fears. Fear of getting lost on the *bhakti-yoga* path would be one, inspiring us to keep sight of the goal and to be vigilant for monsters of material desire lurking in the shadows. —*Nāgarāja Dāsa*

Śrīla Prabhupāda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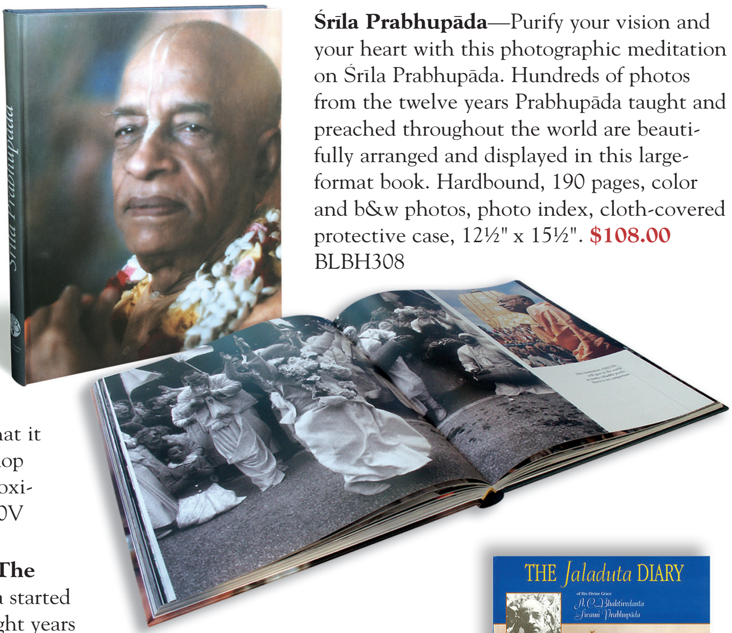

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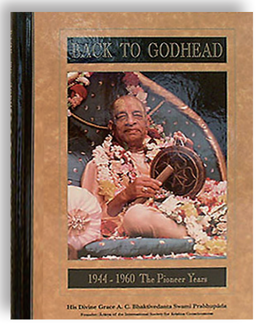
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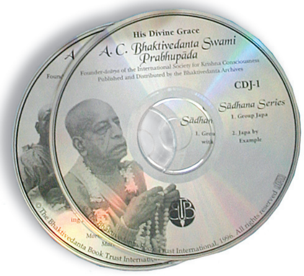
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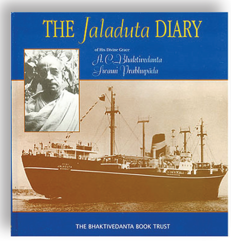
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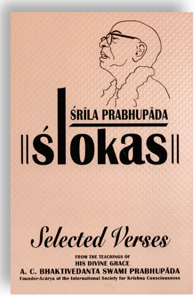
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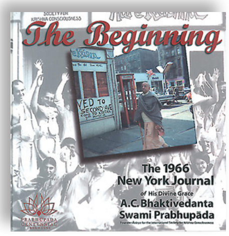
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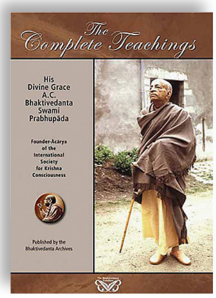
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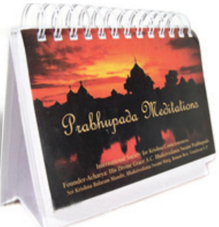
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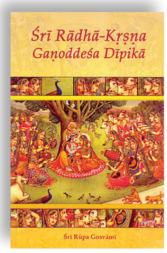

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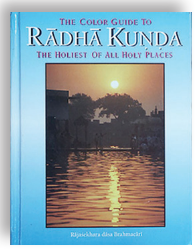

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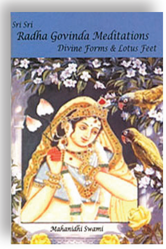

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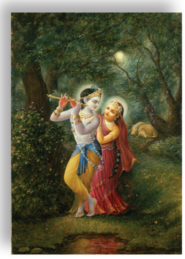

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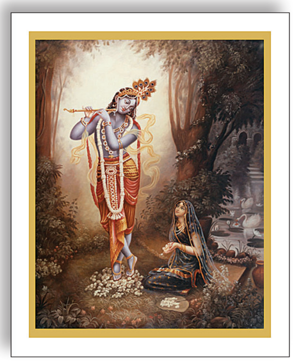

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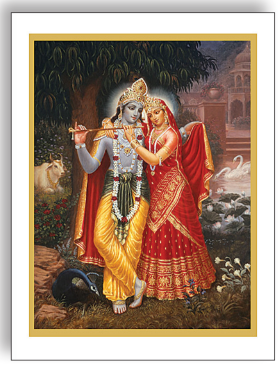

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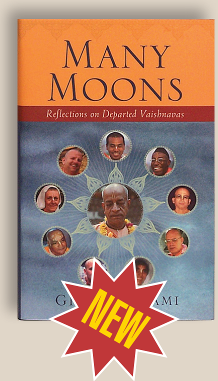

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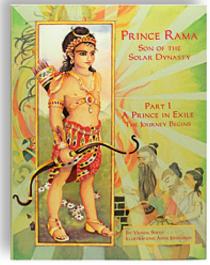

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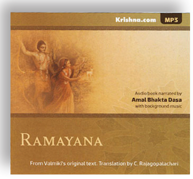

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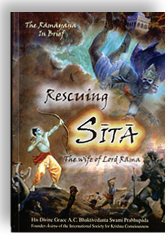

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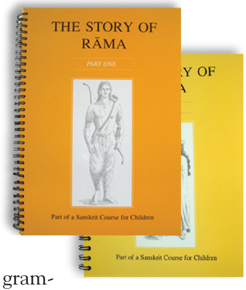

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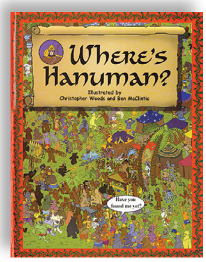

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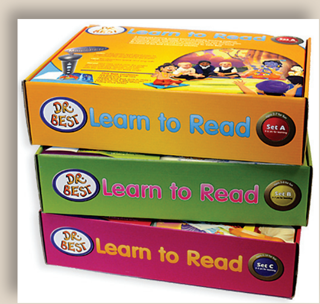
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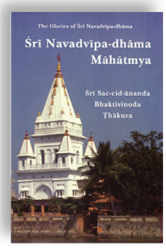
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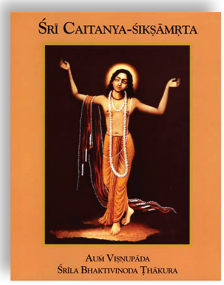
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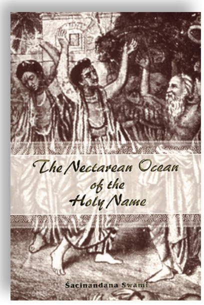
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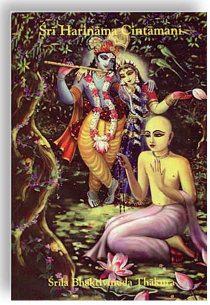
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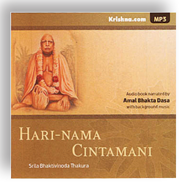
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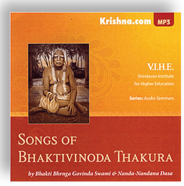
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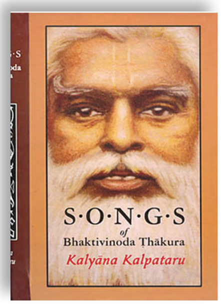
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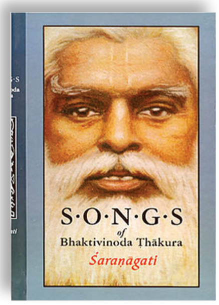
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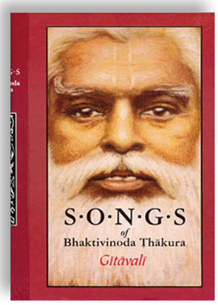
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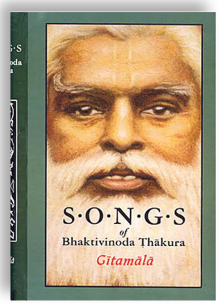
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VEDIC THOUGHTS

Our only business in the human form of life should be to revive our relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead and thus become qualified to return home, back to Godhead. Material happiness and distress come as soon as we accept a material body, regardless of what form. We cannot avoid such happiness and distress under any circumstances. The best use of human life, therefore, lies in reviving our relationship with the Supreme Lord, Viṣṇu.

His Divine Grace A. C.
Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.6.3, Purport

The Lord's form is always youthful. Every limb and every part of His body is properly formed, free from defect. His eyes and lips are pinkish like the rising sun. He is always prepared to give shelter to the surrendered soul, and anyone so fortunate as to look upon Him feels all satisfaction. The Lord is always worthy to be the master of the surrendered soul, for He is the ocean of mercy.

Śrī Nārada Muni
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.8.46

Deluded by the three modes [goodness, passion, and ignorance], the whole world does not know Me, who am above the modes and inexhaustible.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa
Bhagavad-gītā 7.13

Oh no! Just see my condition now! I must be the most sinful rogue of all! Alas, alas, what have I done, what have I done? The human form of life is very rare, but I have passed such a priceless life engaged simply as a slave in the service of the material energy.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura
Śrī Kalyāṇa Kalpataru 2.1.1

The servants of Lord Caitanya may not have much wealth, may not gather many followers, and may not have the academic qualification of being expert in argument and counterargument, but ordinary people have no qualification to understand why they are indifferent to such matters. The devotees consider the service of Śrī Caitanya superior to wealth, followers, and knowledge. Therefore it is impossible for ordinary people to estimate their dignity, glories, and greatness.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura
Commentary on *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata, Madhya-khaṇḍa* 9.233

O people, please hear of this treatment for the disease of birth and death! It is the name of Kṛṣṇa. Recommended by Yājñavalkya and other expert yogis steeped in wisdom, this boundless, eternal inner light is the best medicine, for when drunk it bestows complete and final liberation. Just drink it!

King Kulaśekhara
Mukunda-mālā-stotra 15

2010 Philadelphia Rathayātrā

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September 22: Philadelphia Rathayātrā and Rādhāṣṭamī Festival
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